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PRACTICAL EXPOSITION
OF THE
LORD'S PRAYER:

CONSIDERED AS DESIGNED FOR
INSTRUCTION AS WELL AS USE;
A S A
RULE OF DUTY,
AS WELL AS A
FORM OF PRAYER.

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FORM OF PRAYER

IN THE KNOCKWELL, N. A.

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A

PRACTICAL EXPOSITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

MATT. vi. 9.

AFTER THIS MANNER THEREFORE PRAY YE, &c.

FROM the history of the Heathen world we learn that they prayed indeed to their gods, but that their petitions were of such a sort, and offered up in such a manner, as must have been highly provoking to any superior moral being. Their petitions were such as they themselves were often ashamed of before men; they tended to make the deities they prayed to the procurers to their pleasures, or the instruments of their revenge: And even such petitions were by many of them made, not with an humble and dutiful resignation to the will of the deity, but with murmurs, and sometimes threats, that if they were not granted, they would forsake their sacrifices, their altars, and their worship; that is, they would do their best to ungod them. They could not therefore know that it was sinful to offer vain and worldly petitions, or indeed any petitions, without submission to the will of the deity to whom they prayed: they could not know either what petitions were proper, nor in what manner they should be presented; and therefore the greatest and best

philosopher that the heathen world ever produced, thought it his duty to admonish his cotemporaries to leave off praying till somebody should teach them to pray with more wisdom and advantage; presuming the Divine Goodness would in due time supply them with a knowledge so necessary for them.

The Jews, 'tis true, with whom were the oracles of God, and who drank, though not deep, of the fountain of Divine Wisdom, were not guilty of such gross impieties as were the Heathens: yet even they, we read, murmured and rebelled against the Lord, (Ps. lxxviii.) when their desires not succeeding, *they were disappointed of their lusts.*

And even we Christians, as says St. Paul, (Rom. viii. 26.) *know not what we should pray for as we ought.* We are weak, inadvertent, ignorant, carnal, selfish beings; and as such, amidst all the knowledge the gospel supplies us with, if left to ourselves, should be apt to offer very imperfect petitions. Our weakness would cause many defects; our inadvertence many omissions; our ignorance would make us apply for what we should be better without; our carnality would too much bias our affections to worldly matters; and our selfishness would confine us too much to our own private interest; of course, our petitions would be unfit to be laid before Infinite Wisdom and Perfection.

In short, though men of all religions have agreed that we ought to pray, yet as to the petitions, and the manner of making them, they have been universally faulty, all in some, many in the most extravagant degree; and therefore wanted to be taught what they might, and what they ought not to pray for. Our Saviour, in this prayer which goes by his name, has given us the instruction that was wanted; we should therefore, when we pray, say, *Our Father which art in heaven, &c.*

In the exposition of this prayer, I shall shew you

you its meaning, its beauty, and its design; shall point out the uses it should serve, the duties it teaches, and the obligations it lays us under.

Christ, as God and Man, knew the treasures of God and the wants of man, and could therefore best inform us what we might ask, and what God would vouchsafe to grant: As our mediator too in heaven, could best instruct us what petitions to make in order to preserve an harmony between his requests for us, and ours for ourselves: And to answer these purposes he has given us this prayer, which though short, is full of instruction, and in its order beautiful: It contains all the petitions we should desire to make, and in the order in which they will best be made; it contains all that we should ask, and at the same time teaches us all that we should do; it not only directs our desires, but also regulates our conduct; and every article in it, as 'tis a petition for some blessing, so is it a lesson for some virtue, and at the same time also demands our endeavours to acquire the virtues that are connected with the petition. So that at the same time that we pray according to Christ's direction, we are taught, and promise the practice of a christian. We begin with acknowledging and glorifying the goodness, the majesty, and the power of God, and declaring that it is the duty of us all so to do. We pray for the christian graces of fear, love, faith, obedience, &c. such as will make us worthy subjects of God's kingdom: We pray for food, raiment, health, and all other worldly blessings, and lay ourselves under an obligation wisely to use them. In it we look back upon our past sins, and beg the forgiveness of them: In it we acknowledge our duty to our neighbours, and promise to practise justice, forgiveness, and christian charity: In it we pray by God's grace to be preserved from sin, from the snares and temptations of

the world, the flesh, and the devil, and engage our best endeavours both to resist and avoid them. In short, we do therein declare our belief of God's goodness, our persuasion of his love, our hope of his kingdom, our obedience to his will, our sense of our own weakness, our trust in his grace, and finish all with his praise and glory.

All these petitions are made, and all these duties are called for from every one, who as he ought uses this prayer which Christ has taught us. All these its great and manifold purposes I shall point out, as a spur to a due use of it, that we by such use may become partakers of the many blessings that may thereby be procured, but which are lost to many, through ignorance or inadvertence, who having had it in common use ever since they had the gift of speech, have made it to themselves a lifeless form, a mere matter of course; but these, if they can be made sensible of its worth, may have their affections warmed, and they will then use it with meaning, with attention, with devotion, and with benefit. It may therefore, I presume, be of some use to endeavour to awaken the inadvertent, and instruct the ignorant, by reminding the one, and informing the other what they ask, promise, hope, and profess in this prayer. And this is what every one ought to know, that the understanding and the affections may accompany each other, that the heart and the tongue may keep pace together; otherwise all its benefits will be lost, it being impossible to pray acceptably to God, unless we "pray with the Spirit (1 Cor. xiv. 15.) and pray with the understanding also."

Another reason why this prayer ought fully to be understood, is because it includes all the duties of a Christian, and for that reason has been often called the epitome of the gospel. 'Tis true, the knowledge of the duties and precepts of the gospel may

may from the different parts of scripture be known; but perhaps not in so easy, so short, and so connected a manner as from a thorough knowledge of this prayer; or, if they could, many would not know they were included in this prayer; which 'tis every one's duty to understand, and every one's interest to use with understanding. And if it should be said, that there are but few who do not understand it; for the sake of those few it ought to be repeatedly explained, as old explanations are but too likely to be laid aside and forgotten. Besides, there are many who are more capable of an increase in Christian knowledge than they are themselves aware of.

For these reasons I shall endeavour to explain this prayer, in such a manner as to shew that it comprehends our duty to God, to our neighbours, and ourselves: With relation to ourselves, temperance, sobriety, &c. with relation to our neighbours, justice, honesty, and charity; and with relation to God, faith, love, praise, and obedience.

And thus explaining one thing in itself necessary to be understood, will be giving a summary of our duty.

But before I proceed, it will not be improper to observe, that by our Saviour's express command we are to use this prayer; and therefore, though we may use other prayers to give scope to our spirit, we should do well always to conclude with this, that thereby we may prevent the many omissions and improprieties we may otherwise be guilty of; and at the same time shew our obedience to our Lord and Master's will. Indeed if we had not this help provided for us, we might humbly hope that God would pass by the involuntary defects and errors that attend all prayers of man's composing: but as we have this help, 'tis wantonness, 'tis presumption not to make use of it. Let us therefore,

and as our Lord is saying the words, 'tis

'tis our interest, and our duty, when we pray, say,
Our Father which art in heaven, &c.

M A T T. vi. 9.

AFTER THIS MANNER THEREFORE PRAY YE, &c.

THESE words, *after this manner*, have given occasion to some men to think that our Saviour designed to give his disciples, not a particular prayer for their constant use, but only a model to frame their devotions by. And this mistake they are led into by an inaccuracy in our translation; for 'tis a single word only which is translated *after this manner*; and if it had been translated, as it might, by the single word *Thus*, it might have prevented all doubt and cavil about it. And that our Saviour designed this prayer, not as a model, but for use; we may be satisfied by the constant practice of the church, which always so considered it: And also from his design in giving it, which, we are told by St. Luke, was to teach his disciples a form of prayer; it being customary among the Jewish doctors to give their scholars a particular form of prayer for their use, as a badge of their relation to such a master; and for this reason it was that our Saviour's disciples said unto him, *Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.* Luke xi. 1. And from the parallel passage in St. Luke, *When ye pray, say, Our Father which, &c.* where there is no liberty left them of using this form, or some other like it, but they are positively enjoined, when they pray, to say, *Our Father, &c.*

This then being the very prayer our Saviour designed we should use, I shall proceed to the explanation of it.—'Tis commonly considered as consisting of three distinct parts. 1. The preface, or introduction. 2. The petitions, or body. 3. The doxology, or conclusion.—*Our Father, which art in heaven*, is the preface; and as 'tis fit we should always begin our prayers to God with hope in him, and

and awful thoughts of him, he is therefore described in it by his mercy and goodness, comprehended in the words, *Our Father*; and by his majesty, comprehended in the words, *which art in heaven*.

In explaining this preface it will be proper to shew, 1st, in what respects God may be called *our Father*; and, 2dly, the reasons why our Saviour in this particular place teaches us to call him so.

1. Then, God may be called our Father, as being our Creator. By creation he is indeed the Father of all things; for *there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things*. 1 Cor. viii. 6. But as the terms *Father* and *Son*, strictly speaking, belong to *persons* and not to *things*, he is more properly Father in relation to angels and men; of irrational beings he is the Creator, of rational the Father also; the one are his creatures, the other also his sons. When we call upon God as our Creator, we confess that it was He *that made us, and not we ourselves*, saying, with Isaiah, lxiv. 8. *O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we are all the work of thy hand*. And this confession should lead us to consider what a mighty blessing creation is; how good a Father God in this respect has been to us: for we are too apt to overlook the great goodness of God in this particular, as well as the great obligations it lays us under; seldom giving ourselves the trouble to consider, that to be created, is to be brought out of nothing into the perfection of being; from the dust to be formed into the glorious image of the sons of God; to be placed in a world every where witnessing the goodness of the Creator; every where abounding with what serves us not only for our nourishment, but also for our entertainment, our ornament, and defence; our bodies for their support, ease, and pleasure, and our souls for their exercise, improvement, and delight: and also to become

become capable of enjoying in the presence of God eternal existence, and eternal happiness.

These are the blessings that creation gives us; and the same power that gives them continues them;—which points out to us another view in which God is a *Father* to us, viz. as our Preserver. An earthly parent, who supports those children he has brought into being, we call *Father*; and, from the care and preservation of His creatures, the same title is given to God: Man, who is the work of God's hand, is also the object of his love, and those that he brings into life are not left to chance, or their own weak abilities, but are by his hand, with care and tenderness, conducted from the opening to the close of life. *He is good to all, and his tender mercy is over all his works;—the eyes of all wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season.* Ps. cxlv. 9. 13.

Thus God, our Father by creation, is still more a Father by his care and preservation of us. Creation is a single act of that power which we must admire; preservation a repeated act of that mercy which we must love: the one only makes us capable of enjoying the blessings of life, the other provides those blessings for us.

Creation and preservation, life, and the comforts of it, are the common portion of all men; and so far God is the *Father of us all*: but to us Christians he is a Father not only by creation and preservation, but above all by his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ: thereby we obtain a new relation; *Behold*, says St. John, *what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God*; that we who were aliens and strangers, servants to sin and Satan, should through Christ be made sons and daughters of God, be taken into his family, and though enemies, receive the spirit of adoption, where-
by

by we cry *Abba, Father*: Rom. viii. 15. In this God has given us the greatest possible proof of his goodness to us; our condition by *grace* being so different from that by *nature*, that what we are before baptism, in the gospel account stands for nothing. 'Tis true, God's common care of all his creatures from the beginning of the world, deserves all the thanks and praise that man is capable of giving; yet the overflowings of his goodness to us Christians being peculiarly great, ought in a peculiar manner to be regarded. His beloved Son he sends to take our nature upon him, and lay the foundation of our kindred with him; the merits of this his Son he applies to us, in order to make us in some measure worthy of that relation, and to be treated by him as his children, *i. e.* receive the provision and inheritance of sons; *for if children, then are we heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.* Rom. viii. 17. and as such shall receive an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. 1 Pet. i. 4.

This last meaning, doubtless, is principally designed by the term *Father* in this prayer, though it is to be understood in the other as well as in this; and whoever calls God *Father*, is supposed, as a man, to acknowledge that God created, preserves, and supports him; and as a *Christian*, that he has adopted him into his family, and destined him to a participation of his glory.

As God is in these senses *Our Father*, let us see the reasons why our Saviour in this prayer, and in this particular part of it, teaches us to call him so; which are, 1. to teach us how we ought to be prepared before we use it; 2. to inform us with what affections we should use it; and, 3. to give us all reasonable hopes of success from the use of it.

1st. To teach us how we ought to be prepared before we use this, or indeed any other prayer, viz.

by some sort of likeness to God: For before we presume to call God *Father*, we must endeavour to be like him, it being in vain to assume the title of Son without any resemblance of our Father; we must, as says the apostle, Eph. v. 1. if sons, *be followers of God as dear children*, otherwise he will be no Father to us; it being unreasonable to expect he will own those for his sons who are totally unlike him. 'Tis true, we cannot be like God, either in our nature or our shape; we may however in some measure resemble him in our deeds and affections; may be holy, merciful, just, and good, which is the likeness God expects in his children; and so far as we are holy, just, and good, so far are we his sons: but if we do the works of the flesh, then are we Satan's children, for his children we are whose works we do; *If ye were Abraham's children*, says our Saviour, *ye would do the works of Abraham*;—*but ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.* John viii. 39. 44. Let us not then dare to call God *our Father*, so long as we do the works of Satan, for that is in some sort making God a father to the devil's children. Let us, before we apply to God our Father, resolve to do as becometh his children; for so much our Saviour designed to teach us in commanding us to call God *our Father* when we pray unto him.

At the same time also he teaches us, 2dly, with what affections we should pray, *viz.* reverence, love, and gratitude; the affections that become the children of so great, so good a Father.

I. With reverence: For as one design of prayer is to honour God, our Saviour orders us to begin our addresses to him with the title of Father; a relation that not only begets, but also demands respect and reverence: *Honour thy father, is the first commandment with promise.* Eph. vi. 2. Therefore, *Children obey your parents*, says St. Paul, *for this is right,*

right. If law and reason both oblige us to *honour the fathers of our flesh*, how much greater honour is due to our heavenly Father, *the God of the spirits of all flesh?* who by the manner of his expostulating with the rebellious, in the prophet Malachi, shews us, that 'tis not only his due, but also that he expects it from us; *A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if I then be a Father, where is mine honour?* says the Lord of Hosts. Mal. i. 6. Were there no other difference between God and us but that between father and son, we should be bound to pay him reverence, especially in our prayers to him; when we expect and desire supplies from our father, then at least ought we to express the duty of children. But considering the infinite difference between an earthly and an heavenly father, we should be all awe and reverence; our words, our behaviour, all the powers and faculties of the soul, should be affected; and the outward reverence of the body should witness the inward reverence of the soul.

And as to call God Father is an engagement to *reverence* him, so it is also to *love* him, for Father is a relation of benefit, and consequently of love; and as God is in so many respects our Father, *viz.* by creation, preservation, and redemption, we in each of these respects owe him the *love* of sons. Creation is a wondrous blessing, preservation a greater, redemption a greater still; our love therefore should rise in proportion to the blessings; and if so, they are such, that there is not a degree of love within the utmost compass of our power, which is not required of us; and which we are bound to shew, not in the moment of devotion only, but through the whole course of life, *viz.* by a careful and regular obedience to God's laws: He that says he loves God, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 John ii. 4. — As then love

is productive of obedience, our Saviour instructing us to call upon God in the endearing relation of Father, reminds us of the reverence and love that is due to him, and teaches us that we cannot pray aright, unless we accompany our devotion with such love as is productive of obedience and full of gratitude; for the relation of Father requires not only reverence, love, and obedience, but also gratitude, a thankful remembrance of the many blessings for which we are indebted to him. We should therefore, when we pray, remember not only what we want, but also what we have received; what we already have had, as well as what we expect; sensible, that as all our past happiness did, all our future happiness does and must depend upon God, *the Author and Giver of all good things.*

3dly. Our Saviour has not only thus taught us how we are to prepare ourselves, and with what affections we are to make use of this his prayer, but also gives us all reasonable hopes of success from the due use of it.

Before our Saviour, the common way of addressing our Maker, was by the titles of God, Lord, Lord of Hosts, Jehovah, &c. terms that imply the perfections and dominion, the power and majesty, not the love and goodness of God; terms that taught the worshippers to know and keep their distance, and oftentimes raised terror without hope, and reverence without comfort. But our Saviour has now taught to call God Father, and thereby intimates to us the love that he has for us, encourages our addresses, and promises the tenderness of that near relation; and this he does before he mentions his being in heaven, lest his majesty should awe and estrange us. 'Tis natural for children, in want either of succour or protection, to fly to their parents, and seldom it is that a parent rejects even an unworthy offspring; therefore our Saviour here teaches

teaches us to call God *Father*, in order to encourage our addresses, and give us hopes of success; and this he confirms at the giving of this prayer, in the following words: *If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Luke xi. 11, 13. As our Saviour then has encouraged us to call God our Father, why should we not, upon all occasions, flee unto him for succour? especially being such a Father as, according to the scripture representation of him, exceeds in tenderness and love all the bowels of an earthly parent? *Can a woman forget her sucking child? Can a woman, whose affections are most tender and importunate, forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee,* saith the Lord of Hosts. Isa. xlix. 15. We may then, as God is such a tender Father, go boldly to the throne of grace, and ask with faith, nothing wavering, for so good a Father will not desert or forsake his children: to fear success, would be to suspect his goodness, and as it were, deny that he is a Father to us. Besides, as we have already experienced his goodness, we have no reason to suspect the continuance of it; and his past kindness may give us a comfortable prospect of future blessings. Has he not created us? Does he not preserve us? Has he not redeemed us? And can we, after such singular proofs of his goodness, doubt whether there be any thing, that deserves our prayers, which God will not grant us? *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. 'Tis true, the greatness and the multiplicity of the blessings we have

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received,

received, and of the wants we are under, might discourage us, and make us ashamed to be always craving and expecting; our wants are so great and so many, and 'tis so frequently that we are forced to trouble God with them, that we could not have the confidence to ask, nor the presumption to hope we should be heard, but that the endearing relation of Father encourages our importunities, and as it were promises success. Our Saviour therefore, instructing us to approach the Divine Presence with the many weighty petitions of his prayer, does not lay before us God's omniscience, without which he could not hear us; nor his omnipotence, without which he could not help us; but only his fatherly love, as a pledge to assure us, that *whatever we ask the Father in his name, he will give it us.* John xvi. 23. Let us therefore, when we pray, in obedience to our Saviour's direction, with a full sense of the great blessings of creation, preservation and redemption; with sincere resolutions of obedience; with reverence, love, and gratitude; with faith, a firm reliance upon God's goodness; thus prepared, thus qualified, let us say, Our Father which art in Heaven, &c.

M A T T. vi. 9.

OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN.

AFTER having shewn in what sense we call God Father, and also the reasons why our Saviour has taught us so to call him; we may next observe, that in this address we declare him to be in heaven. Now in scripture we find mention made of three heavens; 1st. the lowest, where the fowls of the air are, and from whence the rain descendeth; therefore the birds are, in the book of Job, xxxv. 11. called the *fowls of heaven*: and when Elijah prayed, 'tis said, *the heaven gave rain.*

James

James v. 18. The second heaven is that of the sun, moon, and stars; thus 'tis said, Mark xiii. 25. *the stars of heaven shall fall*. The third is that which St. Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 2. calls the *third heaven*; and which is in some, though in an inconceivable manner, the seat and residence of the most high God. It is indeed only in accommodation to human conceptions that the scripture tells us, that God's *seat*, his *throne*, his *dwelling-place* is in heaven; for God being infinite, is every where present, and as such, nothing is high or low to him, nor *can the heaven of heavens contain him*. But as earthly princes have their thrones, and those too exalted above other places, the scripture, by way of accommodation to our conceptions, in displaying the majesty of the King of Kings, mentions a place of his special residence, a place seated in the highest regions, the regions of light and glory, even the highest heaven; where it tells us he has his throne, and is attended by ten thousands of angels, of cherubim and seraphim, great and glorious beings.

After this short account of this word *heaven*, let us next see what the whole of this address is designed to teach us; what improvement may be gotten from it.

Although our Saviour gave us this prayer for the exercise even of our private devotion, when *we have entered our closet, and shut to the door*, as he in ver. 6th directs us, yet he commands us to address God in the stile of numbers, and call him, not *my*, but *our* Father; thereby teaching us, 1. that God's goodness extends to all his creatures; 2. that we are to behave to all mankind as to our brethren; 3. to rejoice that we and they are all the children of the Most High.

First then, we are hereby taught to acknowledge the universal goodness of God, as being the Father

of all mankind, *created by one God*; and that we must not therefore, out of pride or passion, exclude any man from his love, vainly arrogating, and to ourselves appropriating it, as his only children; but remember that all men have an equal claim with ourselves, being all children of the same parent, who is neither mine nor thine, but *the father of us all*. Rom. iv. 16.

2. And as we are taught to exclude no man from the love of God, who is the Father of us all, so also are we taught to behave to every man as to a brother, a son of the same father; not with pride and disdain, for the wants of all men are the same, and they are all supplied by the same God. None of us are so great as not to want God's blessings, nor any so low as for that reason to be excluded from them; but, whether rich or poor, are all equally the appointment of his providence, and the objects of his mercy. How unreasonable therefore, and how absurd, is the haughty behaviour which we often see among those, who by a few worldly and perishing circumstances are distinguished from their brethren! We have all one Creator, are all preserved by the same bounty, and were all redeemed by the same mercy; one has not a better Christ, or a better Father in heaven than another; we cannot therefore but condemn that inhuman contempt, that unchristian arrogance which some men are guilty of towards their fellow-creatures; whom yet they are forced to call their brethren whenever they address their God; and who, for all their lordliness, can call God their Father with as much truth and propriety as themselves. Let not then the rich man despise the meanest of his fellow-creatures; nor be ashamed to behave as a brother to him, whom God disdains not to accept as a son: let him hence learn the absurdity of pride and arrogance, and the necessity of brotherly love and kindness.

kindness. Remember, O man, that we are all of the same blood, and all bear the same image ; learn thence, good-will towards thy brother, universal love towards all mankind ; be kind, compassionate, and helpful ; to the utmost of thy power consult and promote the welfare and happiness of all men : to behave otherwise is to be undutiful to your God, and unkind to yourself, for they are both God's relations and your own. And if you have the good of mankind at heart, you will not in your prayers forget it, but when you address your Father who is in heaven, will be as earnest with him for others as for yourself ; will be as mindful of the wants, of the state and condition of your brethren, as your own.

This brotherly love requires ; this our Saviour teaches : no prayer, however private, must be selfish ; and when we in ever so particular a manner pray for ourselves, we must be mindful of our brethren, and say *our Father, &c.* Let us then, laying aside all pride and haughtiness of spirit, with loving hearts, as dear brothers, address our Father, making a common prayer to the common Father of all mankind ; so shall we cause the angels to sing, *How good, how pleasant a thing is it for brethren to dwell together in unity !*

3dly. We may rejoice that our Saviour has taught us thus advantageously to address our Father : for to pray with a sense of our brother's wants as well as our own, with an hearty desire that his may be supplied as well as ours, is a good method to get our petitions heard. Prayers so charitably made, are like to be favourably accepted ; and God will be the more kind to him who is so good to his brethren.

Besides, by being taught all of us thus to address God, we become partakers of the prayers of all, and have petitions sent up to God for us by all our fellow

fellow Christians under heaven. Prayer now concerns the whole family of God, whereof we all are members, and as such are entitled to the benefit and comfort of every good wish that is made for the welfare of it. Rejoice we therefore that we are thus prayed for to our heavenly Father, that every where, and *in every thing, by prayer and supplication our wants are made known unto God.*

Addressing God as *our Father*, you see, reminds us of his universal goodness, as being the Father of us all ; teaches us charity to all men, as we all are brothers ; and gives us joy, as having a share in all their prayers, and all the good effects of them.

Addressing God *in heaven*, is also for our instruction. The Schechinah, *i. e.* the glorious appearance that dwelt in the Jewish tabernacle, was intended to possess the Jews with a sense of God's more especial presence therein, and seems to have given them a notion, that all worship was confined to that place ; at least that prayers were not so well received from any other place as from their temple, of which it was a part ; and 'tis imagined that our Saviour here designs to oppose this narrow opinion, and by commanding us to send up our prayers to God *in heaven*, to shew us that no circumstance of place can hinder the use and efficacy of them ; for heaven is over, and open to us all, wheresoever we are ; and as God is always there, he is always equally at hand to hear us. But whether this be one of our Saviour's designs in this place, or not, he at least intends to teach us, that he whose throne is in heaven is able to do whatsoever pleaseth him ; that heaven is the seat of power, where he to whom we pray, *hath all things under him*, 1 Cor. xv. 27. and is able to give us *whatsoever he seeth to be good and convenient* for us.

But we are taught not only what we may expect
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from God, but also what God expects from us, viz. that when we pray to him, it must be with *purity, reverence, and attention.*

Heaven is the seat of purity, and nothing impure can gain admittance there; prayers sent thither by those who neither intend to purify themselves, nor endeavour to do so, will surely be rejected: *Clean hands and a clean heart* are required, *without which no sacrifice is acceptable to him*, whose throne is in *heaven*. Whenever therefore we are about to pray, we should consider that we are approaching heaven, the dwelling-place of an holy God, who, if *we regard iniquity in our hearts, will not hear us*; so shall we be induced to purify ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and lift up pure hands, such as the holiness of the employment also demands of us.

Having then purified our hearts, and thereby fitted and prepared ourselves to approach our Father in heaven, let us draw near with the utmost *reverence*; as our Father, 'tis his due, and more especially as our Father in heaven, a Father of inexpressible glory and majesty; and to shew us that we should do so, is the reason why our Saviour has taught us by that title to address him. Father is a relation that speaks love and tenderness, and therefore we are to call God Father, that we may dare to speak to him because of his love: But at the same time we must call him *our Father in heaven*, to shew us, that when we do speak to him, it must be with fear and reverence, because of his majesty; at once avoiding both presumption and despair. Come into our Father's presence we may, because he loves us; but the consideration that 'tis coming into the presence of *the great King*, should fill the whole man with the highest apprehensions of the glory and majesty of the Lord before whom he cometh. With what awe and reverence do we behave in the palace
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and presence of an earthly sovereign, and with what care and caution are our petitions recommended to him ! How much more is due, but, alas ! how much less is used, towards the *King of kings, and Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes !* How many of us appear with the utmost carelessness in his presence, and throw our petitions before him in such a manner, as speaks rather contempt than awful reverence ! Alas, we are, though we seem not to know it, helpless wretches, in every thing dependent upon God, and as such should admire and magnify the exceeding great love and goodness of God, in admitting us to come before him ; with our brother Abraham we should say, *Who am I, that I should take upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes ?* full of that lowly reverence which is due from such creatures as we are, to a God so glorious as our Father which is in heaven.

Wherever there is such reverence, it cannot but be accompanied with *attention* ; but if for want of such reverence, we are careless and inattentive to our petitions, we can expect no success from them ; for when our hearts and tongues speak not the same language, when our prayers so little express our wishes, that we scarce know what we are praying for, in such absence of mind God cannot but be deaf to us ; it being absurd to suppose he will hear us in those petitions in which we do not so much as hear ourselves. Nay, such prayers wherein we approach God with our lips when our hearts are far from him, must be more than lost, as they not only shew a disrespect to God, but also a contempt of the good things we pray for. And yet such behaviour, as foolish and as wicked as it is, is but too common among Christians, and is chiefly owing to their not considering whose presence they are in ; for if they had the least sense of their being
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before the glorious Majesty of heaven, 'tis impossible their thoughts should be so wandering, so foolish, nay, and so wicked, as we have too much reason to suspect they sometimes are. We should, then, whenever we pray, remember that God our Father is in heaven, so shall we fix our wandering thoughts; and *shall not be rash with our mouth, nor shall our heart utter any thing hastily before God, if we remember that God is in heaven, and we upon earth.* Eccles. v. 2.

This preface to our Lord's prayer, you see, abounds with useful and weighty instructions, teaching us gratitude, love, and obedience towards God as *our Father*; reverence, purity, and fervent devotion, as *our Father in heaven*; humility, love, and charity to all men, as the sons of the same *Father*. In short, it teaches all the dispositions with which this and every other prayer should be offered up. And if we pray with such dispositions, we need not fear that God will deny us any proper requests. And what requests are proper, we are sufficiently informed in the body of this prayer, and which cannot possibly be any way so properly introduced as by this preface, *Our Father which art in heaven*; by which is meant as follows:—"O God, our Father in heaven, we presume to call upon thee
 "by thy most affecting attribute, with hearts filled
 "with a sense of the greatness and goodness of
 "thee, who art our Father by creation, preservation, but above all, by thine inestimable love
 "in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; through whose mediation we, thy
 "unworthy children, presume to lay our petitions
 "before the throne of grace; sensible, that as thou
 "dost not disdain to acknowledge us for thy sons,
 "we ought to behave to all men as brothers, shewing some degree of that love and goodness towards them, which thou hast so lavished out
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“ upon us ; and as thy throne is in heaven, the
 “ region of purity and glory, we confess, that
 “ with pure hearts and prostrate souls we should
 “ fall low on our knees whenever we appear be-
 “ fore thee.”

MATT. vi. 9.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME.

OUR Saviour having, in the foregoing words, taught us the properest manner of introducing our petitions, and given us encouragement, as children, to lay them before our Father which is in heaven ; in these goes on to shew us of what sort our petitions must be ; what desires those ought to have who profess themselves to be the children of the Most High ; what 'tis fittest for them to ask, and what most likely for God to grant. He knew we wanted as much to be informed what to pray for, as in what manner to pray for it ; and that if our wills, biassed by our depraved affections, were allowed to direct our wishes, we should make ourselves wretches indeed ; that, ignorant of our true interest, and hurried on by our passions, if all our desires were granted, *we should be of all God's creatures the most miserable.* 1 Cor. xv. 19. and it would be *cruelty*, and not *love*, in our *Father*, to indulge us in our wishes. Far happier therefore is it for us, that God, who knows better what is good for man than man does for himself, has set bounds to our desires, and taught us what our wishes should be.

The petitions which in this prayer we are allowed and directed to make, are of two sorts ; the three first have respect unto God, the rest to ourselves : the three which respect God, as to their design and consequences, are much the same ; I shall however treat them separately, because
 they

they set our duty in such different lights as to give and to receive advantage from each other.

The first, viz. *Hallowed be thy name*, I shall explain, and also shew you, that you may and ought to contribute towards what you pray for in this and in every other petition; and then, to encourage you to do so, shew you that your happiness, in no small degree, is concerned in so doing.

By *name*, in scripture language, is meant the person himself; for among the Jews names were often prophetically expressive, or characteristically descriptive of the condition or conduct of the persons they were given to, as you may see by the explanation of many of them, given in this manner; *therefore shall his name be called—therefore shall you call his name*. And there was more than the common reason why they should follow this method with relation to God, because nothing of that incomprehensible being is perfectly known but his *name*; and therefore the Jews called God *The Name*, by way of eminence: and to shew us what notions they had of the perfections of God's nature, they have given him different names expressive of them; one to denote his independency, Ex. iii. 14. Another his majesty, Ps. cxlviii. 13. Another his power, Jerem. x. 16. Another his purity, Psalm xcix. 3. &c. By *name* then is meant God himself, as 'tis used Ps. xx. 1. *The name of the God of Jacob defend thee*; as 'tis also in many other places of scripture.

To *hallow* any thing, signifies to sanctify it, to esteem it as sacred, to think it worthy of honour, praise, and glory, and to use it accordingly: and by *hallowed be (God) thy name*; we mean, may God be praised, worshipped, and glorified in the hearts and lives of all men.

This petition, according to the sense here given,

Is so excellently contrived, that by it the glory of God is at once acknowledged, desired, and promised to be promoted. And when we say *hallowed be thy name*, we confess to God that honour is due unto his *name*; we express our wishes and desires that others may glorify him as well as ourselves; and promise that we ourselves will glorify him: for this petition, and every petition of this or any other prayer, at the same time that it is an expression of our desires, is also an implicit promise, nay a solemn obligation, to conduct ourselves in conformity to it; for all prayer is designed, not to inform God, who knoweth us altogether, but to warm and affect ourselves; and therefore is often called preaching to ourselves in God's hearing.

As then in this petition we confess that we and all men ought, and wish that we and all men may, and promise that we ourselves will, give glory to God; it cannot be improper here, by way of instruction to those who have not yet considered them, and by way of remembrance to those who have, to point out some of the cases in which man may honour and glorify God; for we may do it in thought, word, and deed.

1. We honour God in *thought*, when we think aright of him; when we apprehend him to be, as he really is, an all-perfect being, infinite in wisdom, goodness, power, justice, and holiness, &c. for we must take in all his attributes, as the omission of one is depreciating the rest, all of them giving worth and strength to each other; for, what is power without goodness? what is justice without mercy? Wisdom is of no great use without power, and any being is the greater for being good. When such an idea of God's perfections is entertained, loved, and cherished by us; when we take delight in reviewing it, and renounce other enjoyments for the sake of contemplating it; when,

when, by being frequently reviewed, it begets love, reverence, and admiration, (the affections so glorious a being ought to raise in us); then 'tis that we honour God in *thought*.

In *word* we honour God, when we give him thanks and praise; when a full sense of his perfections seated in the heart, prompts us to *speake the praises of the Lord, to sing forth the honour of his name, and make his praise to be glorious* (Ps. lxvi. 2.); saying, with those in the Revelations, xix. 1. *Hallelujah: salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God*. This the scripture calls *honouring God with our lips*; and that God accepts it as honour, we read Ps. l. 23. *Whoso, says he, offereth me thanks and praise, he honoureth me*.

In *deed* we glorify God, by a life of virtue, by a course of obedience to his laws; as we thereby testify our esteem for his wisdom and goodness in making them, his power in maintaining them, and his justice in vindicating them: and, as they are productive of so much good; as they make our lives so easy here, and purchase so much happiness for us hereafter, our obedience to them cannot fail of bringing great honour and glory to him, who was so wise as to contrive, and so good as to ordain laws, so every way conducive to the good and happiness of man. The same sort of honour we render to God by every single act of devotion; for we can perform no sort of religious worship as we ought, but we must have within us an awful sense of God's perfections, and approach him with the most solemn adoration. So doth devotion shew forth God's glory; and therefore 'tis that the Psalmist calls *worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness, the giving unto the Lord the honour due unto his name*.

We likewise honour God in *deed*, when we shew mercy and charity; when we expend God's superfluous

perfluous blessings in relieving the wants of the indigent part of his family; for 'tis for the honour of God that all his creatures should be as happy as the nature of the state he has placed them in will allow: When therefore we contribute to the happiness of the creature, we contribute to the glory of God; and this may be the reason why Solomon says, Prov. xiv. 31. that, *he that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker*; and that, *he that honoureth him, hath mercy upon the poor*. Thus making God's good things contribute to the happiness of his creatures, Solomon likewise calls (Prov. iii. 9.) *honouring the Lord with our substance*.

There are a great many other ways of honouring God; but to speak to them all would be losing sight of my principal design. I shall therefore only observe to you, that in all cases wherein we can honour God, he requires us to honour him; and that in every case where we do honour him, we do what 'tis not only our duty, but also our interest to do; as I shall shew you, after having observed to you that this petition is placed *first* in order, to teach us in what order we are to place our desires; to shew us that God's glory should have the first place in our minds; that we must desire nothing before the honour and glory of his name, preferring that to all our own private wishes; as the glory of God is what we and all things were created for by him, *who hath made all things for himself*. Besides, the only return we are capable of making God for his many and great mercies towards us, is to study to promote his glory; which therefore should be, and will be, the center of our wishes, if we but duly consider that our own happiness greatly depends upon the promoting of God's glory, as he has in some measure made his own glory and our happiness inseparable, the honour we pay to him returning in blessings to ourselves. And 'tis for this

this reason, that in this petition we are taught to pray for the increase of it, and not that God has any view to himself in it; for honour he needeth not, is not the better for it, can receive no pleasure or advantage from it, or if he could, he has millions of creatures, far fitter than we are, to give it him. 'Tis not therefore for his own, but for our sakes that he requires and expects it from us; that goodness, which can never be praised enough, moving him for our advantage to demand it of us; which I could wish in the fullest manner to shew you, but it would be too long a task in this place to point out to you all the good effects, all the advantages that naturally arise from the different ways of honouring God; I shall therefore content myself with only observing, that if no blessings were the natural consequence of honouring God, yet he has promised a future reward to those who perform this duty, declaring *that those that honour him, he will honour.*

These consequences of promoting God's honour are confined to ourselves; but there are many other also, which extend to those about us. To shew you this also, in the manner that it deserves, would be losing sight of the main subject; and I shall therefore only instance, in that honour we pay to God by a steady obedience to his laws, whereby we acknowledge the authority, wisdom, and goodness of him who made them. For as the fruits of obedience to God's laws are so lovely in themselves, and so beneficial in their consequences; as virtue is so productive of peace and satisfaction, so conducive both to public and private happiness; is so every way delightful and beneficial, the practice of it cannot but attract the eyes, and win the hearts of many, who seeing the beauty of a calm and pious mind, the sweetness of the works of justice and charity, the joy, the health and vigour flowing from temperance and chastity, be-

come in love with virtue, and are excited to join the followers of God. And thus will God's honour be exalted, and our and their happiness be encreased by the natural consequences of the additional virtues that will be practised. For if religion and virtue be more generally practised, we shall receive a farther addition to our happiness, by a participation of those blessings which the more general practice of it must produce; which addition you may be sensible will not be small, if you consider what mighty effects virtue and vice have upon society; that almost all the miseries we meet with in this world are the effects of vice, and the chief of its comforts the fruit of virtue. Nay, our happiness will receive another, and a still greater addition, from the encrease of our reward; for as men will be punished for the vices they seduce others to commit, so will they be rewarded for the goodness and piety they have induced others to practise; *by turning many to righteousness they will be entitled to a crown of glory; and shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.* Dan. xii. 3.

This alone may be sufficient to shew you, that 'tis for our own advantage to honour God. And we may from hence see the height and depth of the riches of the goodness of God, who has made what is so much our duty, so much our interest also, that we cannot perform that duty which is so strictly God's due, without being abundantly rewarded for it; *Oh taste and see how gracious the Lord is, how bountiful in his dealings towards us!*

As God then is so good to us, let us glorify him in our body and our spirit, which are his; let us endeavour, as far as we are able, that the whole earth may be filled with his glory, that all the nations of it may give unto him the honour due unto his name. So shall

shall we practise what we profess in this petition; which may be thus paraphrased :

“ Praise, glory, and honour to the Lord our
 “ God ; thou art good and gracious, O Lord, there-
 “ fore *let the people praise thee, yea let all the people*
 “ *praise thee.* Grant us, O Lord, grace to wish,
 “ and power to promote thy glory in all things; to
 “ employ all our powers, both of body and mind, in
 “ thy service, and to thy honour ; and as 'tis so
 “ much for the advantage of thy creatures that
 “ thou shouldst be praised, worshipped, and glori-
 “ fied, may we, the sons of an heavenly Father,
 “ truly serve thee in holiness and pureness of liv-
 “ ing, to the honour and glory of thy name, through
 “ Jesus Christ our Lord ; to whom with thee and
 “ the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory world
 “ without end. Amen.”

M A T T. vi. 10.

THY KINGDOM COME.

THE foregoing petition shewed us, that God's glory ought to be the first of all our wishes ; and we in this pray for the manifestation of it. God's glory is the end we are to have in view ; and the means whereby we wish it may be advanced, is the coming of his kingdom. And indeed Christ's kingdom does in the most ample manner set forth the glory of God ; God therein appears in all his glory ; nothing ever shewed his goodness, his wisdom, and his power, in such glorious, such strong and beautiful colours, as the kingdom of his Son.

As then God's glory should be the first of all our wishes, and Christ's kingdom best shews it, and most advances it, we must, as by our Saviour here instructed, *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, and not till then expect that other things
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will be added unto us. We are not to ask for anything, not for the forgiveness of our sins, or our daily bread, neither for pardon nor support, till we have prayed, and said, For the glory of thy name, O Lord, may thy kingdom come.

To make my explanation of this petition clear as well as useful, I shall shew you what is here meant by *kingdom*, what by its *coming*, and what by praying for its *coming*.

Besides that universal dominion of God as King of all the earth, extending to all the actions and all the events of all his creatures, we find in scripture mention made of God's kingdom in two other views, one with relation to this life, the other to the next; the one called the *kingdom of grace*, and the other of *glory*; the one the perfection and consummation of the other.

The first, called the *kingdom of grace*, and also the *kingdom of our Lord Jesus*, arose from Christ's having conquered to himself a peculiar people; for the whole world were before the subjects of an usurper, *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience*. This his kingdom, in the figurative phrase of scripture, is called a *kingdom of darkness*, of *sin*, and *death*; we *walked in darkness*, darkness led us into sin, and sin unto death, for *sin reigned unto death*. Rom. v. 21. But when *Christ came into the world*, when the *Sun of righteousness arose*, that darkness which overspread the world was dispelled; the *light shined in darkness*, and we were brought from darkness to light, and from the power of *satan* unto God.

And as Christ, at his coming, brought light to illuminate our minds, so did he righteousness to rectify our will: he did all that could be done to take away sin, to rescue us from the love and from the power of it, and thereby destroy the dominion of the kingdom of sin.

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And having by instruction removed our ignorance; by light destroyed the kingdom of darkness, and by righteousness the kingdom of sin, he brought life also, and conquered the powers of death; he entered the chambers of death, and subdued the king of terrors; he took away the sting of death, and has assured us of a final victory over it by a blessed resurrection. Thus is *death swallowed up in victory*. 1 Cor. xv. 54.

Thus Christ, *who came to destroy the works of the devil*, 1 John iii. 8. has made the kingdom of darkness, sin, and death, a kingdom of life, and light, and righteousness. And this kingdom he conquered to himself by his example and his precepts, his death and resurrection; all which are set before us in his gospel, which is therefore called the *gospel of the kingdom*, (Matt. xxiv. 14) and in which we are taught the laws of this kingdom, which are no other than the law of God vindicated from the false glosses of corrupt mankind; and which though pure and perfect, is yet accompanied by the promise of grace to assist us, and the merits of Christ to cover our defects in the performance of it. For though Christ has thus conquered to himself a people, yet still they are beset with enemies, who are always watching to reduce them to their former bondage; therefore Christ as their King too watches over them by his Spirit, and gives them fresh supplies of grace to avert or conquer the temptations of those enemies, and enable them still to continue his faithful subjects and servants, withal commanding the gospel of his kingdom to be preached throughout all the world, whereby the *kingdom of God is come nigh unto us all*. Luke x. 9.

By this kingdom then is meant, the holy catholic church, all Christian people wheresoever dispersed over the face of the whole earth; and though 'tis called by different names, it is only to represent the same

same thing to us in different lights. When 'tis called the *kingdom of grace*, 'tis to point out to us the assistance which all its subjects are taught to expect: when the *kingdom of God*, 'tis to set forth those more perfect degrees of obedience to God's will, which the gospel requires of us: when the *kingdom of Christ*, 'tis only to point out to us its ruler and founder: and when the *kingdom of heaven*, 'tis to teach us, that all the worthy subjects of it shall be carried thither. Which leads me to shew you what is meant by *kingdom*, when it relates to the other life, and is called the *kingdom of glory*.

The kingdom of grace depended upon Christ's first coming; the kingdom of glory depends upon his second, the day of the manifestation of his righteous judgment, when all the faithful subjects of his kingdom shall be delivered from all their enemies, and from the *last enemy that shall be destroyed, Death*: when Christ, having accomplished the number of his elect, shall give them to *inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world*: when the *glory of his kingdom, and the mightiness of his power, shall be made known unto all men*: when sin and death shall be no more, and the subjects of the kingdom of grace shall become partakers of those *joys which are at God's right hand, inheriting, as the blessed of their Father, the kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world*.

Let us now enquire what is meant by the *coming* of these kingdoms of *grace* and of *glory*.

First of grace. Praying that this his kingdom may come, implies that, in some sense, 'tis not as yet come, at least not to that state of perfection which is to be expected, and ought to be desired. True it is, the kingdom of God *is come unto us*, but then 'tis not in its perfection, 'tis not arrived to that *extent* which the goodness of God designed, nor to that degree of purity which the precepts of

his Son require; we, therefore, in praying for God's kingdom, pray that he would spread the gospel of the kingdom over the face of the whole earth; and that all mankind, with pure hearts and minds, may serve him the only God; for we are taught that he designs the one, and expects the other.

As to the *extent* of Christ's kingdom, the scripture tells us, that the *gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the world*. Matt xxiv. 14:—that *Christ shall reign from the one sea to the other*. Zech. ix. 10. and *even unto the ends of the earth*:—that *all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall do him service*:—that *his Father will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession*. Ps. ii. Thus hath God promised that Christ's shall be an universal kingdom; which in times past it never was, and at present is far from being. The gospel has been received by few, in comparison of the great number who either have never heard it, or when heard, have rejected it. Consider the vast extent of the Indian, Tartarian, and Turkish world, where nought but idols and impostors reign; and how small, when compared with that, is the tract that includes all the professors of the Christian faith. 'Tis true, in some of those parts Christ's church has been established for a time, and then, for some unknown reason of Providence, has been again dissolved; but there are many parts of the world which never have once heard the glad tidings of the gospel. Has then God promised to his Son an universal kingdom? And shall we believe it will remain in its present confined and narrow state? Is God unable to perform what he has promised, or so delusive as not to do it? Can we imagine the world will always continue in its present corrupt and rebellious state; that the scene of things shall be closed without any more

or greater fruits of Christ's redemption ; without any larger extent of his kingdom ? No, the encrease of Christ's kingdom is the express declaration of scripture, and God has assured us that he will again call his once *peculiar people* the children of Israel. Hof. iii. 4, 5. *Israel, says the prophet, shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without a teraphim ; but that, they shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their King, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.* St. Paul also, (Rom. xi. 25, 26.) tells the Romans, that he *would not have them ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and then all Israel shall be saved : as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*

These, and many other parts of scripture, declare the conversion of the Jews ; which to be sure has not as yet happened ; for, except a few that embraced Christianity about our Saviour's time, almost all the disciples of Christ have been converted from the Heathen world ; and there never were so many of the Jewish nation who professed Christianity at the same time, as to give us the least reason to imagine that these prophecies relating to their conversion have been as yet fulfilled. They have hitherto, by a wonderful Providence, been oppressed and preserved ; and though dispersed among all the nations of the earth, having no where a country or rulers of their own, have never either fully mixed with any people, nor been destroyed by them ; they have always retained their name, their faith, and their language, even amidst those nations who have changed their own ; and to this day they remain a visible mark of God's justice, and a standing proof of the truth of that religion they are hereafter to be

be converted to ; and till when, the kingdom of Christ cannot be said to be come.

2. And as Christ's *kingdom of grace* is not arrived to that *extent* which the goodness of God designs, so neither is it to that *purity* which the precepts of it require. However pure the practice of Christianity might be among the first disciples of Christ, at present they are much corrupted, and bring forth but few of those fruits which should shew them to be his disciples : they profess indeed to be members of Christ, and children of God ; but their general behaviour is but little consistent with such profession. Some, instead of submitting entirely to God's will, and fixing their affections upon the good things that he has promised them, are anxious about this world, even to a total neglect of whatsoever relates to the other ; and the service that is due to God is paid to mammon. Others, instead of love, that distinguishing badge of their profession, give themselves up to revenge and bitterness ; and instead of that purity of heart which the gospel requires, encourage such affections as are a scandal to it : some are superstitious without charity, others zealous without knowledge ; some pretend to faith without works, others to the form without the power of godliness ; and some there are who in all respects behave as those might be supposed to do, who are quite strangers both to the laws and motives of the gospel.

As then the *kingdom of grace*, or the dispensation of the gospel, falls short of that *extent* which God designs, and of that *purity* which he requires, it cannot be said to be come ; and therefore 'tis, that all its members pray that it may come, *viz.* to the extent designed, and the purity required.

When therefore we pray that God's kingdom may come, we pray that he would establish his throne, and rule for ever in our hearts, and, by the power of his grace, would subdue the

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hearts of all people, that all the kingdoms of the earth may be the kingdom of God and of Christ; that he would be pleased to convert all Jews, Turks, and Infidels, and so bring them home to his flock, that they may be one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord; that all men may believe in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that all that name his name, may depart from iniquity, leading lives answerable to their profession, walking as becomes the subjects of the Prince of purity and truth; and that having, by the conversion of the world, accomplished the number of his elect, he would hasten his kingdom of glory. For *that* we also here pray may come; for as the present is a state of trial and affliction, *we desire to be with Christ, which is far better*, and therefore pray that, *having accomplished the number of his elect*, he would *hasten his kingdom*, and put us into the possession of the joys that are prepared for those *who love his appearance*. In the kingdom of grace we serve, in the kingdom of glory we shall reign: here we are afflicted, full of fears and cares, vexed for our own sins and those of others; we therefore pray that Christ's kingdom, in its due time, may come, where all our fears, and cares, and troubles shall be no more, shall be exchanged for endless glory and boundless felicity. Obstinate sinners indeed should not dare to pray for it, because it must be to their own confusion; but good men may join their brethren at the altar, and say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; because the sooner he cometh, the sooner will all their desires be satisfied. But then, when they consider how dreadful the vengeance will be, which will then overtake the sinner, out of pity to them who have no pity for themselves, they pray, that before Christ's kingdom comes, those sinners may be converted; and as 'tis more for the glory of God and the good of man, that all sinners should be converted, how much soever it may be to their own

own disadvantage, they rest satisfied that the *kingdom of glory* should be deferred till the *kingdom of grace* shall first come into the hearts of all who will receive it.

Upon the whole, when we pray that God's kingdom may come, we pray for the encrease and purity of his church upon earth, and the final consummation of it in heaven; and the so praying lays us under obligations both with respect to the kingdom of grace and of glory.

First of glory: for as it is a kingdom, we, as subjects of it, are bound to promote the good and glory of it. If we desire that Christ should rule in our hearts by grace, we should be ready and willing to receive him: If we pray for the increase and purity of his kingdom, should not our actions and our prayers agree? should not our wishes and endeavours keep pace together? 'Tis plain our desires are not sincere, if we do not contribute to the success of them: nay, our prayers for this kingdom must be worse than in vain, unless we behave as good subjects ourselves, and encourage others also to do so; unless, to the utmost of our power, we preserve that purity of heart and life, which the laws of it require, and endeavour that others also may do the same. As to ourselves, the light of the gospel, and the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, put it sufficiently in our power to become true subjects of this kingdom; and to make others become such too, is perhaps more in our power than we most of us imagine. Some, by their authority, may keep many within the bounds of virtue; others may, by their capacity, represent virtue in such beautiful lights, as to bring many to the love and practice of it: some, by their substance, may procure instruction for those who might not otherwise be able to see the excellency of their duty, or the necessity of performing it; and example, every one knows, is of wonderful influence, and all of us may thereby encourage and promote the practice of virtue and religion;

religion ; and whoever does not do so, is a scandalous member of God's kingdom, is a base deserter, a traitor to the Majesty of heaven : for if by his behaviour he does it no good ; he must do it harm ; if he does not encrease he will diminish the number of God's subjects, and thereby incur the punishment of a traitor. In short, a good profession and a bad life, the praying for the increase and purity of God's kingdom, and no ways endeavouring to promote it, is such a solemn mockery of God, as deserves the greatest punishment ; and we cannot, without impiety, pray for the coming of God's kingdom of grace, unless it be the desire of our hearts, and the business of our lives to promote it.

But if we are sensible that we so wish and so do, then with comfort and assurance we may pray for *that*, and for the *kingdom of glory* also ; and when we do, we also promise and bind ourselves to prepare for it ; for if we do not *live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*, it would be better for us that there were no other : not to fulfil the ends of Christ's first coming, is treasuring up for ourselves vengeance at his second ; how absurd therefore is it for wilful sinners to pray for that which must be to their everlasting confusion ! Those who are unworthy of the day of grace, should not presume to pray for the day of glory, as it will be to them an evil day, a day of vengeance, and of lasting torment ; *Woe unto you*, says the prophet Amos, *that desire the day of the Lord : (v. 18.) to what end is it for you ? the day of the Lord is darkness and not light—even very dark, and no brightness in it.* We should then, so long as we are carnal men, tremble at the remembrance of that day, and with horror reflect upon the danger of praying, that God's kingdom may come.

And yet this is not a sufficient reason why we should not use the Lord's prayer, for we are positively enjoined to use it, and 'tis for our interest that we are so : and as the obstacles to a right use
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of it are laid by ourselves, it concerns us, by a speedy repentance, to remove them. To refuse to use it, is in effect to renounce Christianity, to give up all our pretensions to heaven, and to throw ourselves into that very state, the dread of which makes us refuse to use it: to use it unworthily, and to be unworthy to use it, are much the same; both ways we shall miscarry; and therefore nothing remains for the sinner but, by a speedy repentance, so to prepare himself as to make it his interest, as well as his desire, that God's kingdom, in its due time, may come. And when we pray that it may come, our desires should be such as here follow:

"Establish thy throne, O God, and rule for ever in our hearts, and by the power of thy grace subdue every enemy that would not that thou shouldst reign over us; destroy the kingdoms of Darknes, of Satan, and of Antichrist; make all nations thy obedient subjects; bring again the Jews to thy fold, and let the fulness of the Gentiles come; and having brought us all into the way of righteousness, then let thy kingdom of glory come. Let thy name be hallowed; and thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven; so shall we be meet partakers of that kingdom which thou hast purchased for us from the foundation of the world. Amen."

M A T T. vi. 10.

THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

THIS petition is, with the greatest propriety and advantage, placed in the order it here stands: it not only carries its own weight with it, but receives light and strength from those that precede it. Acknowledging God to be *our Father*, and praying for the glory of his *name*, and the establishment of his *kingdom*, we are now brought to his *will*.

his *kingdom*, shew us the necessity of obedience to his *will*; for we have no way of shewing our duty to *our Father*, our care for his *glory*, or our desire for his *kingdom*, but by our obedience to his *will*; no otherwise can we glorify his *name*, or submit to his *kingdom*, both, as I have before shewn, consisting in the conformity of our lives to the divine Will. Therefore, that God's name may be hallowed, and his kingdom come, his will must be done in earth as it is in heaven.

It is therefore necessary to know what is here meant by God's *will*; which, according to the generality of writers, has here two senses: one with relation to God's providence, and the other to his laws; one with relation to what God may do to us, and the other to what he requires of us; his laws demanding our active, and his providence our passive obedience: and indeed we do conform to God's will, both by submission and obedience. When we pray that God's *will may be done*, with relation to his providence, we pray, that what comes from God we may receive with a perfect resignation to his will; when with relation to his laws, that whatever we do, may be in obedience to his commands.

The first of these two meanings, *viz.* passive obedience to God's providence, is by many supposed not to be here intended, and they confine the sense of the petition to an active obedience to his laws; for only, say they, by such obedience can God's kingdom come; nor is there any other foundation for the comparison here made between that of heaven and earth, the doing God's will in the one as in the other: for the only way we can resemble the inhabitants of heaven is by an active obedience; it being absurd to suppose that submission, patience, and resignation, can make any resemblance betwixt us and those blessed spirits, from whose eyes all
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tears have long since been wiped away, and who, in a state of happiness, are free from every thing that requires any sort of patience.

And doubtless the petition *principally* intends active obedience to God's laws, though not perhaps wholly exclusive of passive obedience to his providence, as we may reasonably conclude from the scriptures having expressed submission to God's dispensations, in a form very like that of this petition. Thus the believers (Acts xxi. 14.) when satisfied that God had determined St. Paul's journey to Jerusalem, notwithstanding his danger, and their own loss, consented, saying, *The will of the Lord be done.* And our Saviour, speaking of his sufferings, says, *Not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Matt. xxvi. 39. And, *Not my will, but thine be done.* Luke xxii. 42. And methinks doing God's will may fairly be supposed to include submission to what he does, as well as obedience to what he commands; though, as the last is generally supposed to be here intended, I shall confine myself to that, *viz.* obedience to God's laws.

The will of God should be the measure and guide of ours: and this his will he has discovered to us by reason, by conscience, and by the laws written in our hearts; but as these do not, and cannot perform this office perfectly, God of his goodness has also given us a written law, setting forth the acceptable and perfect will of God.

Reason, though by some supposed to be intended to answer the same purpose as revelation, yet never has, nor ever could have, answered that purpose fully: revelation lays us under many obligations which reason would never have discovered; reason only forbids impure and dishonest *actions*, revelation enjoins inward purity of thought and *heart*: reason requires justice, assistance and relief of the distressed and oppressed; to these revelation has added universal love and kindness: reason, we do not find,

ever disallowed the returning like for like ; revelation commands us to do good for evil : reason enjoins only temperance, such as the preservation of health requires ; but revelation enjoins us to mortify our evil and corrupt affections, and to take up our cross and follow Christ. Reason and revelation then, though they both shew us God's will, yet the one does not do it in so extensive a manner as the other ; and whoever would do the whole will of God, must take revelation as his best instructor and guide.

The will of God then means his laws, however made known to us : but fully to understand this petition, we should also know how his will is done *in heaven*. And 'tis but considering the powers and capacities of the inhabitants of heaven, and we shall easily judge in what manner they there obey his will.

Angels, we are told, have large and exalted capacities ; they have no gross bodies to clog and load those faculties, no lusts to darken their understandings or pervert their wills ; no indispositions, no weaknesses, the effects of crazy and sickly vehicles, but are always fresh and lively ; they have no necessities to relieve or provide for, no avocations to interrupt them ; no ill company to debauch them, or devil to tempt or seduce them. Now such beings, doubtless, serve God in a constant, perfect, cheerful, and ready manner. First in a ready manner : they are represented as having wings, in order to shew us that they never delay their obedience, but are always upon the wing, never leaving God's will undone any longer than they know, and can perform it.

They also serve God willingly and cheerfully ; and therefore our Saviour represents them as *always beholding the face* of our heavenly Father, as continually ready to receive and execute the divine commands. Having nothing in their nature to indis-

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pose them ; and having a perfect and constant view of the Divine Perfections, they are carried away by the strong and active principle of love ; and rejoice at every opportunity of expressing that love, by a cheerful obedience to God's will.

Their obedience is not only cheerful as to the manner, but also universal as to the extent of it ; they pay not only a ready, but also a thorough compliance with the whole will of God : having no passions nor interests to dispose them to one duty more than another, having no want of abilities to make them, whilst applying to one duty, inadvertently neglect the rest, the same principle that makes them ready and cheerful, makes them also uniform and perfect in their obedience.

And this their ready, cheerful, and perfect obedience, is also constant ; the beauties and excellencies of the Divine Nature, which they always contemplate, being always the same, they furnish them with the same motives, and produce the same unceasing, uninterrupted course of obedience ; having a constant influence upon their minds, and a constant regularity in their wills, *they serve God* (Rev. vii. 15.) *day and night*, being never weary of their employment any more than of their happiness.

Such, we may fairly conclude, is the obedience paid to God's will in heaven, and such 'tis we are here taught to aspire after upon earth. We pray that God's will may be done by us as 'tis by angels, and thereby express our desires, and promise our endeavours so to do. Heaven is the pattern set us ; and 'tis certain that we are in some measure obliged to imitate it, or Christ would never have taught and commanded us to pray, that *God's will may be done in earth as it is in heaven*. It is therefore necessary to examine in what degree we are bound to do God's will, as 'tis by angels done in heaven.

And this also we shall discover, by considering
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whereof we are made; by examining the powers we are endued with, the weakneses we labour under, and the temptations we are exposed to.

Angels are incorporeal, active spirits; but our souls are inclosed in such material cases as clog and weaken their native vigour and activity; *The corruptible body (Wisd. ix. 15.) presseth down the soul; and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that thinketh upon many things.* The body is too weak to obey the dictates of the soul, and yet too strong to be entirely governed by it; for there is a law in our members (Rom. vii. 23.) which warreth against the law of our minds, and brings us into subjection to the law of sin; and of course, we are not capable of paying that pure and ready obedience to God's will which it receives from angels. However, it is strictly required of us to be very cautious, as our bodies are such incumbrances, not to make them still more so by our own improper conduct.

But we are not only depressed with a load of flesh, and incommoded by its evil inclinations, but our body, that unworthy companion of our soul, is often visited by sickness; and then must the soul act only just as her sickly companion will permit her. How then can we pay the vigorous and uninterrupted obedience of angels, which we are here taught to imitate?—It is our bounden duty therefore to take what care we can, that our tabernacle of flesh be not crazed and disordered by diseases, by gluttony, drunkenness, lasciviousness, or any other act or habit, which may destroy or interrupt our health: for, as upon the health of our bodies depends the vigour and activity of the soul, our any way hurting or destroying it, renders us so far the more incapable of paying that lively and active service to God, which in this petition we desire and promise to imitate.

Besides, as our bodies, when ever so well in health, are constantly in want of many things which

which we are under a necessity to provide for them, much of our time will thereby be employed, which will prevent such an uninterrupted obedience and service as that of angels. How can we *serve God day and night*, when so often necessarily called off to provide for the necessities of our nature? However, 'tis our duty not to be so busy about *many things, as to neglect the one thing needful*. The wants of nature are not near so many as we most of us make them; and if we abuse our time either in providing or enjoying superfluities, we can in no sense be considered as doing God's will as it is done in heaven.

Lastly. We live in a world where almost every object is a temptation, and many a fellow-creature a seducer, an assistant to the grand seducer of us all, whose constant employment it is to cross the designs of God, and destroy the harmony and agreement between heaven and earth, by making us forget that obedience to God here, which is universally paid to him there. 'Tis our duty therefore to fly from temptations, and not by indulgences give an additional force and power to them. We shall be very far from yielding the regular obedience of angels, if we give the least encouragement to those temptations which are designed to seduce us, and draw us off from our duty; and which, though they should be but very seldom complied with, will render our other obedience nothing worth in the sight of God.

As our nature and capacities are then so different from, and so inferior to, those of angels, 'tis impossible that our obedience can have in it the perfection of theirs. But however, according to the least that this petition can be supposed to mean, we are bound, to the utmost of our power, to strive to *resemble* the obedience of angels, though we cannot equal it. Our obedience upon earth must differ not in kind, but only in degree, from theirs

in heaven; *as in heaven*, importing a likeness, though not an equality. We must, and we are able, as well as angels, to serve God readily, cheerfully, and uniformly, though not in the same degree: and unless we do, our other obedience will be by no means acceptable to him, who, by teaching us to pray that his *will may be done in earth as it is in heaven*, shews, that *heaven* is the pattern we must imitate, though we cannot equal it.

Having shewn you what is meant by God's will, how it is done in heaven, and how far we on earth are bound to do it as it is done in heaven, you may from thence perceive, that this petition is designed to forward our improvement, by setting us so exalted a pattern; as the higher the mark is that we are to aim at, the higher in proportion our endeavours should and will rise to attain it. And for that reason we are not only here called upon to pay God the obedience of angels, but elsewhere also required to *be perfect* (Matt. v. 48.) *as our Father in heaven is perfect*; for without something to raise our endeavours to the highest pitch, they are apt to sink below their level, and if we were not enjoined angelic, we should be the more likely to fall short of human obedience.

This petition then should animate and excite us to do more than commonly is done; should warn us not to compare ourselves with our equals, the so doing being a grand hindrance to christian perfection. For common practice is the worst rule of conduct; by comparing our own with that of the world, which has so many and so great defects in it, we shall soon learn to overlook our own, be apt to magnify our merits, to justify our failings, and think ourselves very forward in our duty, when we see others so far behind. Let us not therefore compare our own with common practice, for fear we should flag in our duty, and for want of proceeding, fall short of *the race that is set before us*; but let

let angels be our pattern; so shall we be convinced and ashamed of our defects, and be excited to go on from strength to strength; continually aspiring after greater degrees of perfection, following the example of St. Paul, who *not as though* (Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14.) *he had already attained, either were made perfect;—but this one thing he did, forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forth unto those things which were before, he pressed toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

However, as our abilities are so much inferior to those of angels, we should not be disturbed if we fall short of the ready and uninterrupted obedience of heaven: for this is a state of trial and probation, and we are only in our progress to that state of perfection which is alone to be met with in heaven. If therefore we are heartily sorry for those neglects and omissions which the infirmity of our nature occasions, and do, in any degree, get the better of them, let us not be discouraged; we shall by degrees learn, and be enabled to do still better, and in the mean time God will accept our sincere, though imperfect endeavours.

This petition is designed also for our encouragement; as it will sweeten the labours, and reconcile us to the difficulties of our duty, when we consider that our employment is the employment also of angels; that those exalted and glorious beings are servants of God, and employed in obedience to him as well as ourselves; that none are too great to serve, or through favour exempted; we, in this particular, faring as well as the most glorious beings; and an employment that becomes angels cannot surely be unworthy of men, who themselves also expect to become angels in heaven: surely then, if they desire the happiness of angels, they should not grudge to imitate them; if they

desire the rewards, they should not grudge to pay the duty and obedience of angels.

We should, moreover, consider, that our duty is also our interest; that every degree of obedience is also a degree of happiness: for God, in laying down the rules of our duty, did no so much regard what it was his right to demand, as what it was our interest to do: it was infinite wisdom, and infinite love, that planned our rule of duty; and our obedience to it is enjoined with no other view than to promote our welfare: our duty and our interest go hand in hand together, and every act of obedience is both the means and the cause of our happiness; and had it been left to ourselves to determine the method of making ourselves happy, we could have chose no other. Instead of *no other*, I ought rather to say *no better*. Indeed, if we were wise, if we were perfect judges of happiness in all its views, I then might say *no other*; but we are not: and were we left to ourselves, were we allowed to pursue happiness under the guidance of our own wills, we should make ourselves wretches: for our appetites, when neither governed nor restrained, are most unfaithful counsellors, and for a few present gratifications, would persuade us to sell even our hopes of happiness; never once warning us that the pleasures they crave are but for a moment, and leave nothing but sorrow and guilt behind them. In short, no greater judgment can befall any of us, than to be given up to our own will; nothing can be more unhappy than man when led by his own blind appetites. And for this reason, by way of punishment, God, when *Israel would none of him, gave them up to their own hearts lust* (Ps. lxxxvi. 11, 12.) and let them follow their own imaginations.

It is then greatly for our advantage to be guided by the will of God; and when we pray that it
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may be done in earth as it is in heaven, we lay ourselves under an additional obligation to do it so. Every time we use this petition, we do, as it were, renew our covenant of obedience, and promise to do no more what is right in our own eyes : it being absurd to pray for God's will, if we are resolved to fulfil our own. And if, when we pray for it, we are not ready and willing, in every respect, to do it, our tongues belie our hearts, and we offer to God the detested sacrifice of fools. Let us then, when we use this petition, resolve to do our part towards the success of it, and not promise daily obedience to God, when our lives are a continued rebellion against him.

Lastly. Being commanded to pray that God's will *may be done*, does, in some sort, teach us, that 'tis not *entirely* in our power to do it ; that it, in some measure, depends upon him *to work in us both to will and to do after his good pleasure.* (Phil. ii. 13.) And indeed 'tis certain, that the power of pleasing God is from himself : there is such a depravity in our nature, as makes us at once neither desirous nor capable of a thorough compliance with his will ; and this our natural disinclination to good, every sinful act encreases. Nothing can be plainer than this, either from scripture or experience : experience every one must quote for himself ; but as to scripture, we are there expressly told (Rom. viii. 7, 8.) that *the carnal mind is at enmity with God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be : so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.* (2 Cor. iii. 5.) that *we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* I know that in me, says St. Paul, (Rom. vii. 18.) *dwelleth no good thing : for to will is present with me ; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.* If then, as the scriptures assure us, we are unable of ourselves to do God's will, we may be supposed in this petition, to pray that we

may be able to know God's will as surely, desire it as earnestly, and perform it as perfectly, as the inhabitants of heaven; consequently this petition may be thus paraphrased: "Grant, we beseech thee, O Lord, that we and all mankind may be obedient to thy will, and, withstanding our own inclinations, may do those things that thou wouldst have done; and as we thy servants are weak and frail, grant us the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, to which we promise to join our own most hearty endeavours to do thy will *cheerfully* without murmuring, *speedily* without delay, and *constantly* without interruption; imitating the blessed angels in our obedience here, that we may be perfect in the exercise thereof, when we shall become partakers of glory with them hereafter."

MATT. vi. 11.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.

IN the composition of this prayer, our Saviour has practised the method which in another part of this chapter he had directed us to follow; *Seek ye first* (says he) *the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and then all these things*, that is, temporal conveniencies, *shall be added unto you*. Matt. vi. 33. Thus having here taught us to pray for the advancement of God's *honour*, the enlargement of his *kingdom*, and the performance of his *will*, (thereby rendering to him our due tribute of praise) he then allows and directs us to petition for a supply of our own wants; *relief* for our necessities, *forgiveness* for our sins, and *grace* for our infirmities. And we are to begin, as nature also prompteth, with the preservation of our being, by praying to God *to give us this day our daily bread*: For by bread here, and in many other parts of scripture, is meant, whatever is necessary for the support and comfort of life; for as this is the only petition in the

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prayer

prayer that relates strictly to temporal goods, it doubtless comprehends all that is necessary to make life easy and comfortable to us ; and of course *bread*, which is the only thing mentioned, must be supposed to mean food, raiment, &c. in short, all temporal blessings, as far as we need them, and God sees fit to grant them.

The word *bread* including all the comforts of life, might have been understood in too extensive a sense, and therefore *daily* (as I shall soon shew you) is added, in order to limit it to such only as are necessary. 'Tis true, the meaning of the original word, which is in our translation rendered *daily*, being a word used by no other writer but the Evangelist, has been much disputed among critics ; though methinks the meaning most agreeable to, and most consistent with the rest of the petition, is, bread of *subsistence*, or bread *necessary* (*ἡ τὴν βίαν*) for the support of our being : a meaning which the English word *daily* does by no means express, scarcely conveying any other meaning than what is conveyed by the words *this day*, and therefore only a repetition of the same thing ; and there is still no word to express the meaning of the original word, which I would translate *necessary* ; and if this word does not, I know of no word which does come up to the full meaning of the original. By *daily bread* then, I suppose to be meant so much provision as is *necessary*, and no more ; not riches or superfluities ; not dainties to please our wanton appetites, or varieties to humour our sickly fancies ; for such we may live well enough without, and cannot therefore be included in a petition, which aims only at a barely necessary, at most a comfortable subsistence. Besides, living in excess, is wasting and abusing God's creatures, is contrary to the interest as well as the profession of Christians ; Christ therefore cannot be supposed to teach us to pray for supplies of such wants, as nature does not

suggest, and reason cannot justify; of course, in this petition we pray only that we may be able to maintain life comfortably, not pamper it luxuriously; with Agur, *neither for poverty nor riches*, but to be fed with *food convenient for us*, professing, that having *food and raiment*, we will be *therewith content*.

By *bread* is meant the necessities of life; and by *daily* or *necessary bread*, such a proportion of them as is requisite for the preservation and continuation of our being. And our desires, thus limited to a mere competency of real necessities, are, by *this day*, still more restrained; for by those words, we profess to desire no more than may suffice for the present time; no store even of necessary provision before hand, but only when we want it, and have a present occasion for it; *disclaiming* all anxious care and thoughtfulness for the future time (anxious care I call it, because care and precaution, when joined with content and dependence upon God, and submission to his will, are far from being unfit for us); *professing* to be well enough pleased to live every day upon the fresh supplies of Providence; and *promising* to be contented if we do not want, though we have nothing before hand; *consenting*, according to our Saviour's precept in this same chapter, "to take no thought for the morrow, but to let the morrow take thought for the things of itself;" *believing* that to-day's provision came from God, that to-morrow's allowance is in the same hands, and when to-morrow comes, he, at our request, is ready to grant it to us; *resolving* to beg for to-morrow's provision when to-morrow comes, and not anticipate our duty, by begging to-day what we shall not want till to-morrow, and must then again pray *our Father in heaven to give us*.

By *daily*, or *necessary bread*, we mean the necessities of life in such a proportion only as is necessary for the support of life; and by *this day*, such a pro-

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a proportion only as will preserve it for the present, in opposition to futurity; not, strictly speaking, to the morrow; for *day* and *morrow*, are in scripture used in a looser sense than in common discourse, and signify not any exact portion of time, but only the two general divisions of it, present, and future.

After having shewn you what, and how much we pray for in this petition, it may not be wholly needless, at least for some readers, to observe, that by desiring God to give it us, we do not mean that he would satisfy our hunger and thirst by food from heaven, by such miracles as fed the Israelites in the wilderness; but only that he would give success to our own endeavours in the acquisition of it; for all endeavours would be useless, unless he prospers them; without him they would be all in vain, it *would be but lost labour to rise up early, late take our rest, and eat the bread of carefulness.*

And I would farther observe, that 'tis by many thought that the word *our* joined to *daily bread* (which, say they, would be otherwise superfluous) is intended to shew us that the provision we pray for, we must ourselves endeavour to procure, and that too by just and honest methods; that it may be *our*, as gotten by our own industry; and rightfully *our own*, as not gotten by any injury or injustice to others.

For there are many reasons why man should be kept in employment. He was originally fitted and designed for it; and even in Paradise, where every thing was provided for him, he was not without his work. Whoever, therefore, *will not*, some how or other, *work, neither should he eat*: idleness forfeits all claim to a maintenance; and where abundance is used to support an idle and useless life, though no one's private property be injured, 'tis all usurped, the possessor has no good title to it, and must hereafter answer the use of it.

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But farther, that we may call any bread *our*, it must not only be gotten by an industrious, or deserved by an useful life, but it must also be procured without any injury or injustice to others, or still 'tis theirs, not ours; possession can give us no title to it; and the knave that lives by craft, or the thief who subsists by violence, eats not his own bread, but theirs from whom 'tis taken.

According to this opinion, *viz.* that the word *our* is joined to *daily bread*, in order to shew us that industry, and honest industry only, can give us a title to it; he that prays to God to *give him his daily bread*, promises diligent endeavours to procure, or useful endeavours to deserve it; confessing that otherwise he has no right or title to it, and stands accountable to God for it. He promises too, that his endeavours shall be just and honest; confessing that otherwise he neither expects nor deserves his daily bread; sensible that honest diligence is the only thing that can or will be encouraged by Heaven. And indeed, he that seeks his subsistence by any other than honest means, he that gets his bread by force or fraud, may be said to receive it from the Devil rather than from God. Nay, farther, he that prays to God for his daily bread, and yet uses unjust methods to procure it, shews plainly that he distrusts God, and suspects that he is either not able, or not willing, to grant his requests; nay, as it were, endeavours to make a righteous God the abettor of villainy, the accomplice of iniquity; and if we can suppose such a man to pray at all, 'tis little better than praying, that wickedness may be encouraged by a blessing from Heaven.

By *daily bread*, then, is meant a sufficiency of necessities. The words *this day*, confine those necessities to the present time. And by praying to God to *give us it*, we only desire him to give success

cess to our own honest and just endeavours to procure it.

Having then explained this petition, I shall point out to you the useful lessons it teaches us; the duties it instructs us in. And they are so many, that for the sake of order, and to assist the memory the better to retain them, I shall range them under three heads; and shew you what we may and should learn from praying; 1. for daily bread; 2. for this day our daily bread; 3. that God would give us this day our daily bread.

1. By praying for daily bread, we are taught, what the portion of the world is, that we ought to be satisfied and contented with: we pray only for the necessaries of life, food and raiment; we are not allowed to pray for more, but are to be satisfied with them, and not murmur or complain of Providence if it allows no more; but *having food and raiment, we are therewith to be content.* 'Tis true, the enjoyments of life are not in themselves criminal; the good things of this world were ordained for the use of man, and the abundance of them is *the blessing of God*: But then they are not such blessings as we are allowed to give a loose to our desires after; God only knows and can adjudge the portion of them that suits with each of us; we should therefore rest in his distribution of them; for to some they are no blessings, but *temptations and snares*, which draw them into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown them in destruction and perdition. 1 Tim. vi. 9. The necessaries of life are more than we deserve; farther no man's desires are allowed to carry him: if God indeed thinks fit to trust us with more, we ought to receive them thankfully, and use them carefully; but more we are not to ask.

Praying only for a necessary portion of God's creatures, is also a *caution* to us in the use of them. Our being allowed to pray for no more, shews us, that

that in general no more is good for us; and hints to us our aptness to make a sinful and excessive use of plenty and abundance: Man is and always was very apt to do so; our common parents, Adam and Noah, miscarried, the one by eating, and the other by drinking; vices that have since grown as it were natural to us, and frequently produce pride and haughtiness of heart, carnal confidence, and neglect of God. Our caution, therefore, should be great, and we should use our utmost endeavours, *lest we be full and deny God, and say, Who is the Lord?* Our Saviour thought it needful that his own disciples, his chosen followers, should be warned to *take heed to themselves, lest at any time their hearts should be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life.* Luke xxi. 34. He does not mean surfeiting and drunkenness only in the gross degrees of them, confined to sickness, staggering, reeling, and vomiting, but even the less, and oft-times unregarded degrees of them, when the heart is overcharged, though the stomach is not; when by eating or drinking we have rendered ourselves less apt or less fit for the worship of God; when we indulge such a sensual frame of spirit, as lessens our regard for better things, setting our hearts upon ease and vanity, making *our tables a snare unto us to take ourselves withal, and what should have been for our welfare, become unto us an occasion of falling.* This kind of surfeiting and drunkenness, many who would loath the other are frequently guilty of; and well it is if they in the end escape the snares of it; if it does not by degrees make them quite neglectful of God, and their duty towards him; by degrees harden them in sin, ruining their souls whilst they are hurting their bodies: and if so, it is better to confine themselves to the necessaries they are in this petition taught to pray for; and which warns all those who have more, not to abuse it,

it, at the same time that it teaches those who have not, to be contented with what they have.

2. Praying for *this day* (only) *our daily bread*, for a supply only of our present wants, for the necessities only of the present hour, may and should put us daily in mind of our mortality, and as it were, train us up in a sense of the shortness and uncertainty of this present life. All the comforts of life, if we follow the strict sense of the word, are confined within the narrow compass of a single day, and we are not sure we shall want them for any longer; *no man knoweth what shall be on the morrow*, he must wait till it comes before he can tell whether he shall have any occasion for the provision of it; he may be then past using any of the things of this world, and consequently will have no need of them. As then we are but creatures of a day, why should our care for life extend farther than life itself? Is not one day's provision sufficient for those who have no more to depend on? We are indeed apt to please ourselves with the hopes of a longer continuance, and to say, *Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years*, when perhaps *it will this night be required of us*.

To warn us of this sottish security, our Saviour tells us only of *to-day*, and requires us to beg day by day *our daily bread*; at the same time also *pointing out* to us our obligation to daily prayer, teaching us, that God would not have a day pass over our heads, without renewing our petitions to him; *informing* us, that the lease of the comforts of life lasts but for a day, and on the morrow must be again renewed; that otherwise we have no claim by promise to protection or subsistence from God; and though he may, and often indeed does, give us what we want without our asking, we yet must not conclude that he will do it, because he has done it, and may do it. Daily prayer then is as necessary as daily bread, which depends upon it, we having
no

no assurance of receiving it, without praying for it; being every day of our lives, which we pass over without prayer to God, in danger of wanting even the necessaries of life. We are not allowed to ask bread for the morrow, for this reason, that when to-morrow comes, and brings with it all the needs of the present day, we may apply, in the same manner, for the same supply; that so our devotion, which will preserve and support us in innocence, may every day be employed in procuring daily bread, which is to preserve and support our nature.

We may hence also learn, that too great a foresight, a too anxious thoughtfulness, is superfluous; as we are allowed each day to ask for all we want, and are assured of success, as praying to a Father, neither limited in his power, nor inconstant in his love: and also sinful, as contrary to the intent of this prayer, and as such to the duty of a Christian, who elsewhere, as well as here, is enjoined to take no thought for the morrow. Besides, the desiring a lasting store, an independent provision for a time to come, argues some degree of suspicion either of God's power or love; whoever therefore is anxious for that plenty which he does not want, and, without God's consent, can neither obtain nor enjoy, makes himself a sinner in God's sight, and in some degree a wretch in his own.

Anxious solicitude for future blessings, is *vain*, being no ways conducive to the procuring of them; is *superfluous*, as we do not want them; increases our uneasiness by imaginary wants, and our guilt by suspecting God's goodness. We should therefore, as this petition plainly teaches us, disclaim and reject all anxious and distrustful thoughts of futurity, *casting all our care upon him who has hitherto cared for us*; upon him who gave us being, hitherto has, and, so long as 'tis proper, will continue it. We have no occasion to take any thought for the morrow; if we live, it will take thought for

for the things of itself; its provision is in the hands of God, let us contentedly trust him with it, and stay for it till to-morrow comes: we yesterday prayed (or should have prayed) for our daily bread, and we had it; we repeated the same petition to-day, and it was granted; and if we live till to-morrow, let us again repeat it, and doubtless that God, who *is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, will be as willing and as able to grant it, as he was yesterday, to-day, or any day of our lives, and will give us that day also our daily bread.

3. By praying that God would *give us* this day our daily bread, we are taught to acknowledge, and also are supposed to declare, that God is the author and giver of all good things; it being in vain to ask even bread of God, if it were not his to give; and flying to him for it, is in fact confessing that we cannot be supported by any other than his assistance. And that is no more than we are in duty bound to do, as all we have comes from him, as well as the power of enjoying it: 'Tis he that makes the earth fruitful, causes the sun to shine, and the rain to descend, that corn and the other *fruits of the earth may grow for the use of man*: 'Tis he also that gives us the appetite to take them, the palate to relish them, and the stomach to digest them for nourishment; and how successful soever our own endeavours may be in the procuring, or how great soever the kindness of our friends may be in furnishing us with the good things of this life, yet both the one and the other are but the methods that the God of all things takes for supporting us. And we profess no less whenever we pray to God *to give us this day our daily bread*; disclaiming all confidence in any other means of support, in any store we may have laid up, in any contrivance of our own, or in any succour our friends may be ready to give us; acknowledging that we depend solely upon God, even for our daily bread. And

we really are and must be dependent upon him ; and whether we acknowledge it or not, we can never be so well provided for, as not to stand in need of his support and assistance. The Jews, in their journey through the wilderness, were supported by a constant miracle, were every morning obliged to gather the manna which God provided for them, having no possibility of any other supply. This condition of the Jews in a barren wilderness, is a true picture of human life ; mankind being as much dependent upon God for their support as they were. Even the assistance of friends, and the effects of our own industry, are as much the gifts of God, as the miraculous fall of manna ; 'tis only supporting us by different, by unobserved, instead of apparent miracles. We could not possess any thing but by his bounty, nor enjoy any thing but by his blessing ; of course are as much dependent upon God for our support as they were : the rich are as much so as the poor, for be their abundance ever so great, without God's consent it cannot avail them ; they stand in as much need of God's blessing to prosper what they have, as the poor do to get what they have not ; for their meat cannot nourish them, their garments warm them, nor their houses defend them, without God's concurrence. We are all equally the dependents of Providence ; and in using this petition, each of us in particular acknowledges himself to be so, and professes that he is willing to trust to God for his daily bread.

This petition teaches us with how little we ought to be content, *viz.* present necessaries ; cautions us, if God gives us more, not to abuse it ; hints to us, that in general a little is best for us, by not allowing us to ask any more ; points out to us the necessity of daily prayer ; and reminds us of the shortness and frailty of human life : And when we use it, we must be supposed to mean as follows :

“ Blessed

“ Blessed Lord, without thy assistance we cannot
 “ a moment be supported ; we therefore humbly
 “ beg of thee our daily bread, all that is necessary
 “ to support life, and make it comfortable to us :
 “ Those things thou hast already prepared and laid
 “ before us, and 'tis by our own honest and just
 “ endeavours we are to procure our portion of
 “ them ; but as all endeavours without thee are
 “ but vain, give, O Lord, a blessing to them, that
 “ we may thereby procure wherewith to support
 “ the being which thou hast given us : Necessaries
 “ only we desire ; more, if thou see'st fit to give, we
 “ shall thankfully receive, and hope to thy honour
 “ use it : we are not anxious about the morrow, if
 “ sustained to-day ; but trust, that the same good-
 “ ness that hears and feeds us to-day, will hear and
 “ provide for us to-morrow ; for thy goodness is the
 “ same to-day, to-morrow, and for ever. Amen.”

M A T T. vi. 12.

AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE
OUR DEBTORS.

I N the foregoing petition we begged supplies for
 the body ; in this for the soul : beginning at the
 lowest, we rise to more exalted and important blef-
 sings. After having applied to God for lesser, we
 are here encouraged to ask for those greater things,
 without which the other would be of no service to
 us. For if we should, by God's bounty, receive a
 full supply of all our earthly wants, but be allowed
 to look no farther, not to go on and recommend to
 him the necessities of our souls, our condition would
 still be desperate ; as without assistance from God's
 grace, and pardon from his mercy, the food we re-
 ceive from his bounty, should it nourish us, would
 only fat us for the slaughter. Alas ! if left under
 a sense of our soul's danger, and in despair of any
 help for it, we could neither taste our food, nor be
 nourished by it. Could a criminal, expecting soon
 to be dragged away to execution, though surround-

ed with dainties, receive any pleasure from them ? No, nor could we, under the dread of God's vengeance, have the least enjoyment in any abundance. Mercy, therefore, is as necessary for us as bread ; as without the one we could not enjoy the other. We cannot indeed live without bread, nor can we with bread live comfortably without hopes of mercy ; or if we could, hereafter we should have reason to wish we never had had a being. We are therefore to pray every day for *bread*, as we are mortal ; and for pardon, as we are sinners, and as such, unfit for mercy till we have acknowledged our sins, and begged God's forgiveness of them. To remind us, therefore, of that guilt which we are too willing to forget, our Saviour obliges us to ask for daily pardon with our daily bread, joining the two petitions together by the word *and* ; Give us this day our daily bread, *and* forgive us, &c.

In order to give you the full meaning of this petition, it is proper to observe, that what are in St. Matthew called *debts*, are in St. Luke called *sins* ; and in the 14th and 15th verses of this chapter where our Saviour is shewing us the necessity of forgiving others, they are called *trespasses*, as they are also in that form of prayer which is in common use. The three terms, *debts*, *trespasses*, and *sins*, are synonymous, or words of the same meaning, and it cannot at all signify which of them is used ; for a trespass is an offence against God, by doing something he has forbidden ; every trespass therefore is a *sin*, for sin is the transgression of the law ; and every *sin* is a *debt*, for as God is our Creator, Preserver, and Governor, we owe him worship and obedience, and by not paying him the worship and obedience which is his due, we become debtors to him—(in which view St. Paul, Gal. v. 3. tells us “we are debtors to the whole law”)—and when thus become debtors, we must either make satisfaction, or suffer the punishment due for not making

making it; punishment of course must be our portion, for reparation or satisfaction it is impossible for us to make. All that we can possibly do, is but our strict and bounden duty; and though, after having once offended God by our disobedience, we should spend all the remainder of our lives without once swerving from our duty, that would be no manner of satisfaction for what we before had done: we should not indeed increase our debt; but the not contracting a new debt cannot be looked upon as paying an old one, any more than a man can be considered as having paid what he borrowed, merely by his forbearing to borrow more. As then the utmost within our power is not to encrease our old debt, being utterly unable to make any satisfaction for it, we must, without God's mercy, suffer the due punishment; and therefore our Saviour has enjoined us to make it our daily employment to pray unto God, that, of his mercy, he *would forgive us our debt.*

And the forgiveness which we here are taught to pray for, we shall obtain thro' the merits of Jesus Christ, if our prayers for it are accompanied with the requisite conditions of faith and repentance. For the debt of sin, which it was impossible for us to pay, Christ has taken upon himself, and we shall thereby be excused, upon condition that we earnestly pray for forgiveness, trust in his merits, and bewail our own guilt, it being inconsistent with the perfections of God to forgive an impenitent and unbelieving sinner.

Now the pardon we here ask, and thro' the merits of Christ may expect, includes not only the remittance of punishment, but also the addition of reward: we desire in it not only forgiveness, but reconciliation; not only not to be punished, but also to be treated as though we had not transgressed. And even in this sense, if we pray, believe, and repent, God, through Christ, will *forgive us our debts,*

provided also that we *forgive our debtors*; for our prayer for forgiveness will be accepted only upon condition that we *forgive our debtors*.

By *debtors* we are here to understand, not, in the vulgar meaning of the word, those only who owe us money, but those also who have any way injured us either in word or deed; for there is a duty we owe to one another as well as to God, and when we omit it, or act contrary to it, we are not only debtors to God, but also to man. To God we owe worship and obedience; to man justice and charity: by withdrawing either the worship or obedience due to God, we become his debtors; and by withholding either love or justice from man, we take from him his due, and becoming debtors to him as well as to God, are bound to repair the injury, or suffer what punishment it deserves, unless the injured person forgives the debt, which by the way he is bound to do; and if he does not, God, who is more injured than himself, may forgive it in his stead, and he is not to expect that forgiveness from God which he refuseth to his brother.

We are most of us sensible enough how much we all stand in need of forgiveness from God, and are ready enough, at times, to implore it of him; but we do not sufficiently attend to that condition, upon which alone we are to expect it. Nay, by the behaviour of many of us, one would imagine that they thought the forgiveness of others was no way necessary to their own, and that, among their other sins, their hatred and malice would be forgiven also: nay, forgiveness is looked upon by many as a virtue of uncommon size, above the reach and beyond the obligation of mere mortal man. However, forgive they must, or they cannot be forgiven; and, uncommon as forgiveness is among Christians, 'tis what they promise in their daily prayers, and must not ask it of God, without giving

giving it to their brethren. Forgiveness is the condition of forgiveness, and that condition too they promise to fulfil, and thereby lay themselves under a fresh obligation to perform it, and double guilt if they neglect it. How necessary then is it for Christians, who do and must use this prayer, to lay aside every the least degree of malice and revenge, and come before God with charitable and loving hearts? If they do not, they cannot pray either with sincerity or truth, but mock the God they pray to, and disclaim the mercy they implore, with their own mouths condemning themselves, when with hatred in their hearts they come before God with this petition. For this petition is a sort of covenant or agreement, which man consents to before God: forgiveness of debts is what he desires of God; to forgive his debtors is what he promises to God: and when he uses this petition, he must be supposed to declare his consent to these conditions, and acknowledge that he desires only that forgiveness from God which he gives to others, and expects no more mercy than he shews; neither desiring nor expecting God should forgive him his debts, unless he forgives his debtors.

This then is not only a request for pardon from God, but also a declaration of charity to man, and as such affords us much useful instruction.

First then, it teaches us, that forgiveness is a necessary condition of forgiveness; which is plainly enough implied in the petition itself, but is expressly declared to be so by our Saviour, in the verses that immediately follow the prayer: *For if (says he) ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* This declaration, made in such a strong manner, has given occasion to some men to think that no other condition is required; and that
if

if we pardon others, our own pardon, without any other condition, will surely follow. To rectify this mistake will cost no great pains; 'tis only recollecting, that the forgiveness here promised to the pardon of others, is elsewhere promised to prayer, to faith, to repentance, &c.; and of course, according to the whole tenor and design of the gospel, pardon belongs not to any single grace or virtue, but to the conjunction of them all: and all that can be intended by this declaration of our Saviour, is, that forgiveness is as necessary a qualification as any other, and that as this qualification is insufficient without others, so will others also be without this.

As forgiveness then is so necessary a qualification, we ought to know the extent and degree of it, or we shall not know whether we have acquired it. And this we may also learn from this petition: God, it tells us, will forgive us our debts, *AS* we forgive our debtors; of course, the forgiveness we expect from him, we must give to them (as far as our imperfections will allow) with the same readiness, and (as far as our power permits) with the same extent; the particle *AS*, requiring a resemblance or likeness between our forgiveness and God's. Now the forgiveness we ask and hope from God, is a full and perfect one, not only a remittance of *our* punishment, but also of *his* displeasure; that, being reconciled to him, we may become partakers of his love.

First, 'tis *full*, extending to all our sins, both great and small; therefore praying that all, even our greatest sins, may be forgiven, we are bound to forgive all, even the greatest injuries that are done to us.

2. 'Tis also perfect and compleat, being no more confined to number than to degree. For be our sins ever so many, were they more in number than the hairs of our head, we still desire and hope the forgiveness.

forgiveness of them all ; we therefore are to forgive others, how frequently soever they may have offended us. *If thy brother offend thee* (says our Saviour) *thou shalt forgive him—I say unto thee, not until seven times, but until seventy times seven.* Matt. xviii. 22.

3. It is not only a remittance of our punishment, but also of God's displeasure, a return to his favour, and a participation of his love. Such, therefore, should our pardon to others be ; we should forgive them, not in words only, but also from the heart, a heart clear of all grudge and resentment, and be as willing to receive the offender to reconciliation, as if he had never offended us.

But as the state and condition between man and man, and between God and man, is very different, our forgiveness of others cannot, in every particular, be exactly like his ; nor can it be supposed, that because our forgiveness must be ready, extensive, and compleat, it should thence follow that we are to refuse satisfaction for the mischief, or reparation for the damage or loss we may have suffered from the injustice of others. Nor can it hence follow, that we may not by law recover what fraud or force has taken from us ; for the law of justice is not made void by the law of charity ; nor can it be any injury to take that from another, which is not his but ours : and therefore it may safely enough be done, provided, 1. that we have no revenge or malice in our hearts, and intend not the ruin or the mischief of the offender, but only the recovery of our own ; 2. that the matter be of moment enough to call in the assistance of the laws of our country to redress us ; 3. that the offender hath wherewith to make good the loss we have sustained ; for if he has not, 'tis cruelty and malice to confine him, because the law may permit us so to do. Indeed, if the injury be of an heinous or a public nature, such as disturbs and

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hurts

hurts society as well as ourselves, 'tis so far from being wrong, that 'tis our duty to call in the law to punish it; but even then we must take care that 'tis the crime, and not the person we are offended at; that 'tis the honour of the laws, or the good of society, or, where the case will permit it, the reformation of the offender, we have in view, and not the satisfaction of any spiteful or revengeful passion: otherwise 'tis revenge, and not justice, and we shall, without repentance, be punished for punishing another.

Nor does it thence follow, that though we are obliged perfectly to forgive those who injure or deceive us, that we are also obliged, after reconciliation, again to trust them, or to take them into any farther degree of friendship than is common among all Christians: for caution is lawful, tho' malice is not: and friendship, and Christian charity; that is, the intimacy of a few, and the common league of love among all Christians, are two different things: and therefore it does not follow, that an offending brother is entitled to the one, because he is to the other, nor will the state and condition of the world allow it.

The forgiveness here promised, then, does not interfere with prudence or justice, the laws or the execution of them; but only excludes every degree of hatred, malice, and revenge; requiring a willingness to do all the good offices that are consistent with Christianity, and the good of human society, even to those who injure us, how often soever the injury be repeated; and that *we be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake forgiveth us.* Eph. iv. 32.

And that this sort, this degree of forgiveness which we here promise, 'tis but reasonable we should give, we may easily be convinced by the few following considerations: 1st. That the offences of others against us, are trifling and inconsiderable,

siderable, compared with ours against God. Opposition, contradiction, ill-language, defamation, lessening our interest or our substance, are the common injuries we receive one from another, and they are in themselves but trifles : 'tis true, great is the wrath and resentment that is occasioned by them ; but that ought to be looked upon rather as the effect of too violent a regard for the things of this world, than of the greatness of the injury that is done to us.

2. That the offences of man against man are fewer in number, as well as of a more trifling nature than man's against God ; for we seldom find injuries, in any great degree, multiplied upon one and the same person, men having neither the power nor the will for it ; and though their power should continue the same, their malice is not long a satisfying ; after a few injuries they rest, and are willing to be at peace. But our affronts and offences against God daily increase ; we add sin to sin, till they are more in number than the hairs of our head, yet our hearts do not fail us, we expect and hope the forgiveness of them all.

3. That the offences against us come from our equals ; we are all fellow-servants of the same Lord : our trespasses therefore against each other, cannot, in themselves, be so heinous as those against our Lord ; no more than it can be the same crime in any one to strike his fellow-subject, as to strike his king.

And to shew us that our offences against each other, when compared with those against God, are but few in number, and small in guilt, as coming from equals ; and that consequently, as God forgives us, 'tis more than reasonable that we should forgive each other ; to shew us all this, is the design of our Saviour, in the parable of the unmerciful servant. The parable represents the debt of the servant to be ten thousand talents ; that of his fellow-

low-servant to him, but an hundred pence ; meaning, that our offences against God are as talents, but against each other only as pence. Now the talent, at the lowest reckoning, is six thousand times greater than the penny :—The talents too are ten thousand, the pence only an hundred ; meaning, that our crimes against God are not only greater, but also far more numerous than those of man to each other : ten thousand to an hundred, is as an hundred to one ; so that our offences against God are an hundred times more in number than man's against man, and each of them multiplied by six thousand degrees of guilt. The difference then between the servant's debt to his lord, and his fellow-servant's to him, is, according to the parable, the same as between six hundred thousand and one. The lord frankly forgives his servant this monstrous debt, because he was unable to pay it ; so should the servant also have done by his fellow-servant, but would not ; *therefore the Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors : So likewise* (says our Saviour, applying the parable) *shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*

From these considerations, and many others that might be added, it appears how very reasonable our forgiveness of each other is ; and of course how inexcusable we are, unless we grant it. It cannot be so difficult as 'tis necessary, nor so irksome to corrupted nature, as 'tis agreeable to uncorrupted reason. If then we will be so unreasonable as to shew no mercy, how can we be so unreasonable as to expect any ? *He* (says the wise man) *Ecclus xxviii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. that revengeth, shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his sins in remembrance. Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done thee, so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. One man beareth hatred against another*

ther, and doth he seek pardon from the Lord? He sheweth no mercy to a man which is like himself, and doth he ask forgiveness of his own sins? Ask he may, but will not be answered; God will not forgive us our debts, unless we forgive our debtors: But if we do, we then may, with hopes of success, say—

*“ O God, whose nature and property is to have
“ mercy and to forgive, receive our humble peti-
“ tions; and though our offences are many, great,
“ and grievous, we humbly beg thy goodness may
“ forgive us the debt that we cannot pay: we do,
“ and will do by others, as we beseech thee to do
“ by us; we do and will heartily forgive all the
“ offences of others against us; if not, we cannot,
“ and do not expect any forgiveness from thee;
“ can have no hope of thy love, or claim to thy
“ mercy.”*

M A T T. vi. 13.

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.

THE beautiful structure and contrivance of our Lord's prayer; the excellent order in which the petitions are ranged; the beauty and force which one, from its situation, gives to, and receives from another, I have already observed: I cannot, however, pass by the present opportunity of giving another instance of it.

In the last petition we pray for the forgiveness of our past; in this for the prevention of future sins; and if a due sense of the nature and consequences of sin induced us, in that, to desire a pardon, then this petition against future transgressions follows in the most seasonable manner. For what can be more proper, or more necessary, than to desire never again to incur the same desperate condition? than that, being made whole, we may sin no more, *lest a worse thing come unto us?* Relapses being more dangerous than the first diseases.

Besides, what will forgiveness avail us, without a guard against future temptations? Unless we have the protection of God, the assistance of his Holy Spirit, 'tis in vain to ask forgiveness; as we shall reap but little benefit from a pardon we so soon shall forfeit, by repeating our transgressions. That God's mercy, therefore, may not be in vain, 'tis necessary that we beg the assistance of his grace; and we are accordingly instructed by our Saviour, immediately after our petition for pardon, to beg of God to *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. Besides, the desire to avoid temptations not only naturally follows the desire of pardon, but also, in great measure, tends to procure it; for what is a more likely qualification for the pardon of what is past, than the desire we here express of future obedience? Can we, in a more effectual manner, shew our esteem and regard for God's favour, than by wishing to avoid those temptations which may lead us into those sins whereby we shall forfeit it, shall render ourselves unworthy and incapable of it? 'Tis then both useful and necessary, 'tis with force and beauty both, that, *forgive us our trespasses, is followed by, lead us not into temptation*.

After shewing you what is meant by temptation, what by praying against it, and in what sense God may be said to lead us into it; I shall point out to you the useful instruction that this petition affords us.

I. Temptation, strictly speaking, signifies nothing more than a *trial*, or experimental proof, of the dispositions or qualifications, of the virtue or viciousness of any person or persons. In this sense 'tis that God tempted Abraham, when he commanded him to offer up his only son Isaac; and was fully satisfied of his faith and obedience, by his *not withholding his only son from him*. Gen. xxii. 12.

Thus he tempted the Israelites, by a long and tedious journey through the wilderness, that he might

might know what was in their heart; whether *they would keep his commandments or no.* Deut. viii. 2.

Thus, again, he tempted them, by permitting seducers to work wonderful things among them, that *he might know whether they did love the Lord with all their heart, and with all their soul.* Deut. xiii. 3.

Adversity and prosperity are reckoned among the temptations of this sort; adversity trying our faith and patience, and prosperity our sobriety and trust in God; the one being apt to make us distrust God, and the other to forget him. In short, every circumstance, state, or condition whatsoever, that may bring our virtue to the proof, is, in this sense of the word, a temptation. But it has another meaning, and signifies also *an enticement to evil*; and whatever is called a temptation in this view, is designed not to prove, but to ensnare us.

Of this sort of temptations, are those of the *world, the flesh, and the devil.*

The devil is constantly employed in endeavouring to ensnare and seduce us, by laying before us pleasing or terrifying objects, in the most proper seasons, and the most advantageous manner: he has cunning enough to see, and malice enough to take advantage both of the weakness and corruption of our nature.

But supposing there were no devil to tempt us, we have temptations enough within ourselves; our lusts and passions are a fruitful source; and, were there no devil to encourage, assist, stimulate, and provoke them, are of themselves sufficient to draw many of us into all sorts of evil. We are by nature prone to evil; *out of our hearts proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.* Matt. xv. 19. We know not the depth of our own wickedness; when free from all restraints, we are *given up to our own hearts lusts, and left to follow our own imaginations.* Psalm

lxxx. 12. At first, in conceit, at a distance, there are few flagrant vices but we shrink at ; but when God permits us to lie under frequent temptations, and fair occasions repeatedly offer, the best of us at length become victims to them.

But if there were not in our nature an inclination towards evil ; were not that inclination encouraged and stimulated by Satan's wiles ; we, however, live in a world where pleasing objects might supply the place of natural inclination, and our fellow-creatures that of the tempter ; almost every object in it being a temptation, and many a fellow-creature a seducer. The delights which worldly objects bring with them, bear hard upon us ; and the example, insinuation, and instigation of our fellow-creatures, make frequent victims of those who are already half subdued.

These, the *world*, the *flesh*, and the *devil*, do all entice and ensnare us ; nor is there any station of life, or passion in the human nature, no age, no condition, but what is more or less exposed to the temptations of them all ; they have their baits, though of different sorts, for the young and the old, the wise and the foolish, the rich and the poor, the passionate and the meek, the wanton and reserved. In short, we are placed in the midst of temptations, which 'tis both our interest and our duty to avoid and to resist ; and 'tis sufficient employment for the rational part of us, to restrain the licentiousness of the sensual.

By temptation, then, is meant, either that which is designed to make trial of our faith or virtue, or to persuade us to renounce it ; either to discover what there is either of virtue or vice within us, or entice us to forsake the one, or practise the other.

We are next to see what we mean, when we pray to God *not to lead us into temptation*. But 'tis proper first to observe, that we do not, nor can be supposed, to pray against all temptations whatever ; for this is a state of trial and probation, and the very

very condition of our nature is to be exposed to temptations of one sort or other : the struggle between the flesh and the spirit is to last as long as life, nor can we be freed from the one, till we have resigned the other. So that praying for an exemption from all temptations, would be praying against the condition of our being, and the nature of the state we are placed in. Besides, were there no temptations, there could be no virtue ; we should be incapable either of virtue or vice, and consequently of reward or punishment : it is therefore inconsistent with our interest, to desire a freedom from that struggle between flesh and spirit, which is both the condition of our nature, and the means of our happiness. We are not, therefore, to pray for a deliverance from all, but only from too many and too powerful temptations : temptations we do and must expect to meet with ; and only desire that those we do meet with, may *be such as are common to men* (1 Cor. x. 13.) ; such as cannot well be avoided, and such as we may have grace and strength to conquer and subdue. In short, we pray not against all temptations, but only against an increase of those we are by nature exposed to ; we desire an exemption, not so much from the temptations themselves, as from the guilt they may occasion ; declaring our dread of them, though not refusing to be exercised by them ; not so much designing to encourage our sloth, as to provide for our safety. For as that which tries our virtue may endanger our innocence, the best preservative against sin, is to be kept out of the way of temptation. — But God, we are told, never tempts any man ; why then should we pray him, *not to lead us into temptation* ? for leading us into temptation, is nothing less than tempting us.

To remove any difficulty that may arise from this observation, it may be, perhaps, sufficient to shew that God may, in several senses, be said to lead us into temptations, without being immediately,

diately, or, strictly speaking, the author of them.

Satan, who is *continually going about seeking whom he may devour*, is a being of such malice, such subtlety and power, that we, who are but weak and corrupt creatures, have but too much reason to dread his many and great temptations. Now as nothing, either good or bad, happens to us without God's permission, of consequence, as Satan (so we read in the book of Job) must have his consent, before he can attempt any thing against us—what we suffer from Satan, we may, in some sense, be said to suffer from God, and he may be said to lead us, as permitting us to be led; and in this sense we use the petition, not supposing God to lead, but only suffering us to be led. And this sense is agreeable to the stile of scripture, where 'tis common to attribute that to God, which only comes to pass by his permission. We are told, (2 Sam. xxiv. 1.) that *God moved David to number the people*; whereas it was *Satan*, as we are assured (1 Chron. xxi. 1.) that *provoked him to number them*. Thus, also, the death and sufferings of our Saviour by the hands of the Jews, are said to come to pass by the *determinate counsel of God*, Acts ii. 23.—by which nothing more is meant, than that God, foreseeing that the Jews would meet with temptations to do such and such actions, and also their inclination to comply with them, would not interfere or hinder them; resolving to bring good out of evil, by permitting the cruel and wicked Jews to be the means and instruments wherewith to bring about the great and glorious design which he had formed, of our redemption by Christ Jesus.

Farther; God may be said to lead us into temptation, by withdrawing the assistance of his Holy Spirit, and leaving us under such temptations as shall assault us, and will, when forsaken by him, get the better of us. For though God may be no otherwise concerned, either in the temptation, or the fall that it occasions, than as denying us his assistance;

assistance; yet, as the temptation as certainly prevails as if it were really influenced by him, he may, in some sense, be said to lead us into temptation, when he grants us not that assistance, which alone can preserve us from being overpowered by it. For 'tis not in weak man to direct his steps, or to be so firm in his duty, as to walk safely in it, when Satan solicits him, when his unruly passions are in strong commotion, and sensible objects bear hard upon him. When the world, the flesh, and the devil, with united forces, attack him, what can weak man do without God's assistance? He will as surely fall into many and great sins, as he who wanders in the dark will stumble; as he who walks in slippery places will slide; or he be entangled, whose path lies through thick laid and hidden snares. As then, without God's assistance, we shall surely be a prey to the tempter; as to be forsaken of God is a most dreadful judgment; we beg of him to continue to us the assistance of his grace, and not take his Holy Spirit from us; in effect saying, as the Psalmist expresses himself, *Hide not thy face from me, O Lord; thou hast been my help, leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.*

Thus have I shewn you, that by *temptation* is meant, either a trial of our virtue, or an enticement to evil;—that when we pray against it, we are not supposed to mean every temptation, because this is a state of trial and probation, and the very condition of our nature is to be exposed to temptations of some sort or other;—and, that God may be said to lead us into temptation, either by permitting Satan to lead us, or by withdrawing the assistance of his Holy Spirit from us. I shall next point out to you what useful instruction is conveyed to us through this petition.

First; It may teach us humility; a lesson which all of us want to learn; for self-conceit, to which we are so mightily addicted, is not only the most dangerous, but also the most unreasonable and ab-

furd passion that can be harboured by weak man, who is exposed to a variety of temptations from every quarter, and without more strength than his own, will be overpowered by them all. And were we sensible of this, we could not harbour the vain notion of our self-sufficiency, but should, with the utmost humility, confess our weakness, and sue to God for his assistance; as we do when we desire God to *lead us not into temptation*, distrusting our own strength, and desiring to avoid the trial of it. And happy would it be for us all, could we arrive at that truly Christian humility which this petition suggests to us, and which our Saviour, by it, as it were, calls upon us for.

The next lesson we should learn from it, is, compassion upon the weakness and frailty of our fellow-creatures. We are but too apt to be severe upon the failings of others, and to make little or no allowance for circumstances that are unknown to us, nor even for such as are common to us all. But had we a due sense of the frailty of our nature, and of the variety of temptations to which it is exposed, we should, methinks, having a fellow-feeling of their condition, instead of censuring, pity our brethren, and mourn over their unhappy failings. We are none of us secure from falling, nor can we tell how soon the condition of another may be our own; others therefore are entitled to that compassion from us, which, if in their condition, we should expect from them. Besides, as we are all weak, and consequently the difference between one man and another must be chiefly owing to the different degrees of assistance, and of temptation, which each man meets with; the perseverance of one may be owing to small temptations and great assistance, whilst the fall of another may have been the effect of severe and repeated trials; and he that fell had been, perhaps, far worthier than he that persevered, had they both undergone the same temptations, with the same assistance. In short, we do, or should

know

know the frailty of our nature, and the variety of temptations to which we are all in general exposed; and are at the same time ignorant both of the degree of the temptations, and of the assistance that each particular person meets with. There is, therefore, more than sufficient reason for charity and compassion towards those who fall. Let us not then be severe upon our brethren, but follow the advice that St. Paul enforces upon the Galatians, (vi. 3.) *Brethren, says he, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

We are also from hence taught, that 'tis our duty both to resist and avoid temptations; to act as well as pray against them. 'As ye pray, so practise,' is a general rule to be observed, with respect to all the petitions of this prayer; for if we do not exert ourselves to procure what we pray for, we cannot well be supposed to be much concerned whether we are answered or not; plainly enough declaring, that what we pray for, tho' worth the asking, is not worth the trouble of getting: nor can God well be supposed to help those, who are not willing to help themselves. Our endeavours therefore must always keep pace with our desires: and when we pray, we must also work; for all that we can be supposed to pray for, is only assistance, and assistance supposes endeavours, and is only to help those who do work, and not to do their work for them; it would be more than assistance if it did all the work itself, without their co-operating with it.

We must, therefore, resist, as well as pray against temptation; and also keep, as far as we can, from whatever may lead us into it: 'tis even expected, as our Saviour informs us, Matt. v. 29, 30. *If our right eye offend us (or rather, causes us to offend) that we pluck it out; and if our right hand offend us, that we cut it off, and cast it from us; that is, that*
whatever

whatever may be the occasion of sin, be it ever so difficult, or ever so irksome to us, we must part with it. We all by experience know, or should know, what temptations are the most dangerous to ourselves; and if we will not endeavour to avoid those to which, by constitution, or by course or state of life, we are the most subject to, 'tis in vain to pray against them.

But, besides peculiar or personal temptations, there are many to which we all of us are subject, and which, though as they are dangerous they ought, yet are not, avoided by many, so carefully as they should be; two or three of which, by way of example, and warning too, I shall just mention.

One is, *bad company*; which we are, by scripture, reason, and experience, taught to be infectious: and as it is so, St. Paul charges us *not to keep company with any man that is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.* 1 Cor. v. 11. If, therefore, knowing that nothing is more catching than vice, we will, instead of *reproving the unfruitful workers of darkness*, herd with them; we go beyond our duty, and can receive no benefit from this petition.

Idleness, is another generally known source of wickedness. No man in a state of idleness can long continue in a state of innocence; by doing nothing he will soon learn to do evil: if he will not employ himself, Satan, or his own evil fancy, will not fail to find out employment for him. Those, therefore, whom Providence has exposed to this temptation; those who are not forced to work or to want bread, if they will not provide themselves some employment to prevent the ill consequences of an idle life, may pray, not to be *led*, but will surely *fall*, into temptation.

Another source of sin is, the indulging ourselves in such things as are not in themselves evil, and yet not far from being so. If any of us will look

back

back upon our past lives; we shall find, that most of our failings were occasioned by indulging ourselves in lawful things with too much freedom; for as we are by nature prone to evil, we take a sort of pleasure in going as far towards it as we can, even to the borders of it, so we do but avoid entering into it; and thereby we tempt danger, give advantage to Satan, and are insensibly drawn into many a sin that we had no intention to have committed: Sometimes by being gradually reconciled to a vice, which we at first detested; sometimes by not being able to distinguish the boundaries of guilt and innocence; and sometimes by being so close upon the slippery brink of sin, as inevitably to fall into it. As, therefore, they that will go as far as they may go, are in danger of going farther than they should go, it becomes a duty to keep at a distance from sin, and *abstain from all appearance of evil*: not only from what is such, but also from whatever is like it, is a-kin to it, or is on the borders of it. If we do not, it is in vain to pray 'not to be led into temptation;' for we ourselves are our own tempters, and of course consent to our fall; we choose what we know to be the occasion of sin, and do, as it were, tempt temptation. What is it, then but trifling with God, to pray 'that he would not lead us into temptation,' when we lead ourselves into it?

As bad company, idleness, and making too free with lawful things, are the three grand sources from whence most of our temptations flow; if we do not cautiously avoid them, 'tis something more than in vain to pray 'not to be led into temptation.'

By this petition, then, we are taught humility of mind, charity and compassion for our weak and erring brethren, and the necessity of our own endeavours to resist and avoid temptations. And whoever uses it, ought to mean by it as follows:

"O God,

“ O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst
 “ of so many and so great temptations, that, by
 “ reason of the frailty of our nature, we cannot
 “ always stand upright; we beseech thee, as with-
 “ out thy permission nothing can approach to hurt
 “ us, that thou wouldst so direct us and our affairs,
 “ that we may not be exposed to more or greater
 “ temptations than the nature of our state requires.
 “ So guide us through things temporal, that finally
 “ we lose not the things eternal; granting us such
 “ strength and protection, as may support us un-
 “ der, and carry us safe through, all temptations.”

M A T T. vi. 13.

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.

THERE are two opinions concerning these words; one is, that they are only an explanation of the foregoing, and that *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*, are but one petition. The other is, that they are two distinct petitions.

Those who contend, that *deliver us from evil*, is only an explication or illustration of the foregoing words, tells us, “ that in the Vulgate (an early translation of the New Testament) and in St. Luke, these words, *deliver us from evil*, are wanting;” and they call that a plain proof, that there is nothing contained in them, that is not virtually contained in the foregoing; and consequently, that they are not two distinct petitions, but that one is only an illustration to the other. And to give additional force to their opinion, they quote the reason given by the famous Origen, for the variation between St. Matthew and St. Luke. “ Our Saviour (Origen tells us), speaking, in St. Matthew, to the multitude, expresses himself in such a full and explanatory manner, as their capacities required; but in St. Luke he is teaching his disciples; and as they were of better understanding than the multitude which he was instructing in St. Matthew,

Matthew, he had no occasion to express himself so much at large at the one time as at the other: for which reason, this explanatory part of the petition in St. Matthew, is left out in St. Luke." And from hence, they who favour this opinion, conclude, that the two sentences unite and agree in this one request, "That God would so prevent us from falling into temptations, as to keep us from the evil and mischief of them."

Those who contend that they are two distinct petitions, urge, that the original word which in St. Matthew is translated *evil*, is always applied to persons, never to things; and of course must signify, not the mischief we fear, but the person from whom the mischief may come; and should have been translated, not, from *evil*, but, from the *evil one*, i. e. Satan, the author and promoter of all evil.

Which of these two opinions is best founded, is a matter but of little consequence. Be they two petitions, be they one, there is no material difference, the meaning of these words being much the same, according to either opinion.

Supposing, *but deliver us from evil*, to be only an illustration of the foregoing words, *lead us not into temptation*, and to be designed to shew us that we pray against temptation only because of its *evil* consequences: then the sense is this, "So prevent us, O Lord, from falling into temptation, as to preserve us from guilt, the evil and mischief of it."

And supposing that *deliver us from evil*, signifies, deliver us from the *evil one*, Satan, the evil author of temptations; the meaning of the petition is just the same; for the reason why we pray to be delivered from temptations, is not because they are themselves *evil*, but because of the guilt and punishment which are commonly the consequences of them: and the reason why we pray to be delivered from the *evil one*, is, because if we are given up to his power, we shall meet with, and be over-

H

powered by, such temptations as will bring upon us the evil of guilt and punishment.

So that it does not signify, whether by *evil* is meant the evil of temptations, or Satan, the evil author of them; and after having begged of God to *lead us not into temptation*, we may, according to either sense, consistently enough desire him to *deliver us from evil*: which word, in this petition, is generally supposed to have a threefold sense, and to mean, 1. The evil of sin, or the guilt of it. 2. The evil of punishment, the consequence of sin. 3. The evil author of sin, Satan, who is also to be the instrument of its punishment.

These three significations of the word *evil*, are all consistent with the design of this petition; and therefore I shall separately consider them.

The first, the *evil of sin*, or the guilt of it, is the evil which the prophet (Habak. i. 13.) speaks of; where he says of God, *thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil*:—and 'tis an evil worse than sickness, poverty, or death; 'tis the worst of all evils, and the cause of all: 'tis not only an evil in itself, but makes many other things evil, which but for that would not be so. As then sin is so great an evil, we are in this prayer directed to sue to God, for his mercy in the *forgiveness of sin*, and for his protection, in keeping us from the *temptation to it*, and the mischief of it.

The second kind of evil, *viz.* the evil of punishment, is the consequence of the first, sin being the cause of punishment. These two sorts of evil the prophet Jeremiah (xviii. 8.) has in one verse expressed by the same term: *If that nation, says the Lord, against whom I have spoken, turn from their evil (ways), I will repent of the evil (punishment), which I had thought and threatened against them.* According to this sense of the word *evil*, this is a distinct petition from the foregoing; and the meaning of it is this:—“ But if it be thy good will and
“ pleasure, O God, to make trial of us by tempta-
“ tions,

" tions, and we should be overpowered by them,
 " pardon and deliver us, we beseech thee, from the
 " evil we shall deserve to suffer."

The third sort of evil we here beg deliverance from is the Devil, who in scripture is stiled the *evil one*: and the reason why he is so called is, because he was the first author of evil, is the cause of sin, and of the misery that has been or shall be the consequence of it. He, the *evil one*, the *god of this world*, the *prince of darkness*, is ever laying baits to entice, and traps to ensnare us: *he goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*; and, could he have permission from God, has cunning, power, and malice, sufficient to shake the strongest faith, and seduce the strictest virtue. We therefore beg to be delivered from him, *i. e.* not to be given up to his power and malice; but by the grace of God to be secured from all his treachery and wiles; knowing that, if abandoned by God, we shall soon become Satan's slaves, *and be led away captive by him at his will.*

These three evils may all, consistently enough, be deprecated together; and as they all bear so strict a relation to each other, we may reasonably enough suppose them to be all designedly included in this petition. And in order to promote a warm and earnest use of it, I shall in a few words point out the greatness of these evils, Satan, Sin, and Death the wages of it; from whence you will plainly see the greatness of the delivery from them.

1. Satan is our great enemy; and whoever does not believe, or does not regard the danger and mischief he is exposed to from him, must, I should think, be ignorant of the many places of scripture where, for his power and influence, he is stiled the *god of this world*, the *prince of this world*; and as such, warn us of our danger from him.

2. Sin is also an evil of the greatest magnitude, as the mischiefs it brings upon ourselves and others might convince us; and the death and sufferings

of our Saviour to redeem us from them, do infallibly assure us. Are not all the evils which this world abounds with, the effects of sin? And could any thing less than the immense sufferings of a Divine Person satisfy the divine wrath against it? If then the guilt of sin be in proportion to its mischiefs, and to the price of its satisfaction, it must be infinite, and bear no proportion to any other evil.

3. The third evil, *viz.* of punishment, is, the scripture tells us, to take place in hell, the dismal seat of every kind of torment; where all the terrors of the Lord shall be set in array against sinners; each shall have its power of giving pain increased; and all joining together shall put them to misery, such as all the torments of human malice and power can give us little or no idea of.

These three, Satan, Sin, and Death its wages, we here beg to be delivered from; they are the greatest that we can possibly be exposed to, and 'tis God alone can preserve us from them. How greatly therefore does it concern us, diligently, earnestly, and frequently, to apply unto him for his assistance! One would think that if we were sensible of the greatness of the evils we are exposed to, and the greatness of the mercy in being delivered from them, we should be always upon our knees, continually beseeching God not to *lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* From the *evil one*, the author and promoter of sin; from the *evil* of sin, itself an evil, and the cause of every other evil; and from the *evil* of punishment, the wages of sin:—From all these evils good Lord deliver us!

M A T T. vi. 13,

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER,
AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER. AMEN.

HOWEVER useful and instructive this doxology, or form of praise and glory to God may be, yet its genuineness and authority has been much disputed

puted amongst Christians. Those who argue against the authority of it, tell us—that 'tis wanting in all the old Latin copies—in all the Greek copies of St. Luke, and in some of those of St. Matthew—that several of the fathers, in their comments upon the Lord's Prayer, have taken no notice of this part of it—and that the doxology used in the eastern church was different from that of the western, and that consequently 'tis highly probable neither of them is genuine.

Those who contend for the authority of it, urge that the omission of it in St. Luke may be the effect of his usual brevity—that there are but two copies of St. Matthew where it is wanting, one of which is much suspected, and the authenticity of the other not at all comparable to that of those which have it—that it is not probable the fathers would have dared to add their own inventions to this venerable form, of Christ's own composing, or that the church would have allowed them to do it—that if they had made any addition, in order to gain credit to it, they would at least have inserted it in St. Luke as well as in St. Matthew—that it is expounded by some of the fathers with the rest of the prayer—that it is agreeable to the Jewish forms, which our Saviour has in general followed throughout the whole prayer, and no where with more beauty and reason than here; as prayer cannot well be complete without praise; it being sordid to ask all from God, and return him nothing.

These are the reasons on both sides; and which of them are best founded, let others decide. Our church has not formally condemned or approved either of these opinions, but has chosen the middle way between them, using the Lord's Prayer in one part of its service with, and in another without the doxology. We may therefore safely wave an enquiry into its authenticity, and search out the meaning, use, and beauty of it, and see what profit and instruction may be gathered from it.

It is and may be considered in two different views: 1. As a form of praise and thanksgiving; 2. As a motive or reason for using the foregoing petitions, and to give us hope of success from the using of them.

I shall consider them, 1st, as a form of praise, containing a solemn and grateful acknowledgment of the chief attributes of God; of his sovereignty, *thine is the kingdom*; his omnipotency, *the power*; his majesty, *the glory*; and his eternity, *for ever*.

1. When he ascribe unto the Lord sovereign authority, implied in the term *kingdom*, we acknowledge that God is the supreme Lord, the great King over all the earth; and that, as we are his subjects, he has a right to dispose of all things relating to us; and that we as his subjects owe him true and faithful allegiance. But, as there may be a just and rightful authority where there wants power to execute it, we acknowledge that this is not the case with God, to whom we ascribe not only authority, but also omnipotency, implied in the word *power*: whereby we mean that God has (not only a rightful authority over all things, but also) a power or sufficiency to execute that right, and do *whatsoever pleaseth him, in heaven and in earth*. And by the term *glory* we acknowledge that God's kingdom, and his power, and whatsoever pertaineth to him, is glorious; declaring, with Moses (Exod. xv. 11.) *the glory of his holiness*; with the Psalmist, (cxlv. 11.) *the glory of his kingdom*; and with St. Paul (2 Thes. i. 9.) *the glory of his power*. And also his eternity, implied in the words *for ever*; thereby declaring, that whatever God is, he is such for ever; that his perfections are not only glorious, but eternally so; that his *kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*, (Ps. cxlv. 13.) *and his dominion endureth throughout all generations*; that his is *the power, and the glory, for ever and ever*. Amen.

There are several forms of praise and thanksgiving in scripture, like, tho' longer than this of our Saviour;

viour; one of which I shall quote, as being so full as sufficiently to explain what is meant by his: 1 Chron. xxix. 10, 11, 12, 13. "Wherefore David
"blessed the Lord before all the congregation.
"And David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of
"Israel our Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O
"Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the
"glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all
"that is in the heaven, and in the earth is thine;
"thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art ex-
"alted as head above all. Both riches and honour
"come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in
"thine hand is power and might; and in thine
"hand it is to make great, and to give strength
"unto all. Now therefore, O our God, we thank
"thee, and praise thy glorious name," &c.

You may see, by these words of David, what the meaning of the last part of the Lord's Prayer is, when considered as a form of praise and thanksgiving.

We shall next shew what is meant by it, when considered as a reason or motive to use the foregoing petitions of this prayer, and to give us hope of success from the use of them: And that it is designed as such, we may reasonably enough conclude, from the connection which the causal particle *for*, makes between this and the foregoing petitions. *For*, or *because*, *his is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever*, we do and should make our petitions to our Father in heaven, hoping that he will hear us, and grant us our petitions.

When considered in this view, its purport is as follows:—"Thine is the kingdom, the kingdom that
"ruleth over all: we and all the world are thy sub-
"jects, and entirely depend upon thee for life,
"health, food, raiment, and shelter; we therefore
"flee unto thee for a supply of all we want, and a
"deliverance from all we fear, for thou only, as
"King of all the earth, art able to succour and
"defend thy servants; and as 'tis for the support
"of thy kingdom, and the encrease of thy glory, we
"hope

“ hope and believe thou wilt hear us, and grant our petitions.

“ *Thine is the power:—Thou hast spoken once, and twice have I heard the same, that power belongeth unto God; a power that is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.* Eph. iii. 20. We therefore make unto thee our petitions, knowing that whatever we ask of thee, thou art able to grant us: and as by granting our requests, thou wilt manifest thy greatness; wilt cause men to speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power, (Ps. cxlv. 11.) we are induced to make our prayers unto thee, and to hope for the success of them: for thine is the glory of all we have, and all we do; thou art glorified by our dependence, our preservation, and our thanksgiving: and we hope and believe that, for the glory of thy name, thou wilt hear us; that thou, O Lord, wilt arise, and help and deliver us, for thine honour.”

And this God is our God for ever and ever; his kingdom, his power, and glory, as was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Whenever therefore he is applied to, he is equally able to hear us, and grant us our requests; and we may at all times apply to him, trusting in the Lord, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength, and he will be our help for ever and ever. Amen.

Amen (which concludes the prayer) is an Hebrew word, and its meaning, without regard to any particular place, is *verily, truly*; but, according to the design of the place where it may be used, its meaning varies; and I shall, for the advantage of those who have not made their observations upon this word, point out the various senses in which 'tis used; that they may know its meaning, not only here, but also throughout the scriptures, and the offices or service of our church.

In scripture 'tis frequently used by our Saviour at

at the beginning of his speeches, with a design to gain the attention of his hearers, and get credit with them.—*Verily I say unto you*; and doubled, *verily, verily I say unto you*. Where the original word is *Amen*, and signifies, *indeed, of a truth*. St. Paul uses it with a somewhat different view. He tells the Romans (i. 25.) that the Heathens worshipped the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. And immediately adds to it *Amen*; whereby he intends to affirm the truth of his last words, *blessed for ever*. *Amen*, or, he is blessed for ever. And (chapter 5th of the same epistle) speaking of the Israelites, he says, *of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever*. *Amen*. That is, Christ the Son is God, and blessed for ever. The *Amen* in both these passages is only an affirmative repetition of the preceding words. He tells the Corinthians, (2 Cor. i. 20.) *that in Christ the promises of God are yea and Amen*; i. e. are firm and sure. St. John (Rev. iii. 14.) expresses himself thus, *These things saith the Amen*. i. e. as he himself interprets, the faithful and true witness.

In all these passages *Amen* is used by way of affirmation; in the Old Testament it is used by way of desire or wish. Jeremiah, after the false prophet (xxviii. 2, 3, 4.) had declared peace and deliverance from Babylon, says *Amen*. Now in the following verse, (14) he declares that what these prophets had spoken was false, and denounces a still heavier yoke from Babylon; and therefore by *Amen* he cannot be supposed to affirm the truth of what they had said, but only his own desire, that if God thought fit, what they foretold might prove true, though at the same time he knew it would prove false. *Amen*, or, as says verse 6th, *The Lord do so, the Lord perform the words which thou hast prophesied*.

These are the senses in which *Amen* is used in scripture, viz. by way of affirmation and desire; in which senses 'tis also used in the service of our church.

At the end of the Creed, and in every other place where the subject is concerning truths, and is the object of our assent, *Amen* is the affirmative, and by it we acknowledge the truth of the foregoing articles; and do by it, as it were, repeat all that had been said, and declare our belief of it: and consequently it means, *So it is; All this I believe*. This is also its meaning in the Communion, that part of our liturgy which is appointed to be used upon Ash-Wednesday; the design of which, as there declared, is that the congregation, being admonished of the great indignation of God against sinners, may be warned to flee from those sins, to which the scriptures have declared, and they are called upon by the word *Amen* to confess, the curse of God to be due.

This observation upon the meaning of the word *Amen*, in this place, may afford an answer to that groundless objection, which some weak persons make to this part of the liturgy. They will not attend the service of the church upon that day, at least they will not say *Amen*, as directed, because 'tis sinful to curse their neighbours. 'Tis a foolish scruple, for 'tis certain they neither do, nor are intended to curse their neighbours. The *Amen* has there the same meaning as at the end of the Creed, and is quite different from that which it has at the end of a prayer, being only by way of assertion, and not of desire; and by it they do not curse their neighbours, nor desire that they may be cursed; but only admonish themselves, and their neighbours too, of the wrath of God, denounced against the sins that are there recited, in order to move both themselves and them to earnest and true repentance. God has already pronounced a curse against those very sins; and by saying *Amen* at the repetition of them, they only declare the guilt of those sins, and confess them to be of so heinous a nature, as to deserve that curse which God has already denounced against them. So that the *Amen* is no more than
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a confession of the guilt of sin, as a motive to repentance, whereby to prevent the curse denounced against it; and is so far from being sinful, that it is praise-worthy, for the honour of God, and the good of religion.

But to return from this, I hope not useless digression. *Amen*, when at the end of a prayer, is an expression of our desires: the matter of prayer being the object of our affections, the *Amen* betokens our wish for the success of it.

If the prayer be repeated, as in the service of the church, by one person, and the *Amen* only by the congregation, it signifies their concurrence with all that has been repeated; and by it they mean the same as when they say in the Litany, *We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.*

But if both prayer and *Amen* be said by the same person, as in private devotion, then *Amen* is a repetition of all the foregoing prayer, and a fresh expression of our desire of that which we had prayed for in it.

But if not at the end of every prayer, at the end of the Lord's Prayer at least, (the petitions of which we are sure are for God's honour and our good) *Amen* may fairly be supposed to be an *Amen* of hope, as well as of desire, and to signify not only, *So be it*, but also, *So we believe it will be unto us*; and thus 'tis explained in our catechism—*This I trust God will do of his mercy and goodness; and therefore I say Amen, so be it.*

Having explained the doxology, we will next see the useful instruction to be gathered from it.

When considered in the whole as a form of praise and thanksgiving, it should teach us the propriety of joining prayer and praise together; that whenever we pray to God for the blessings we want, we should also thank and praise him for those that we enjoy; *magnifying the Lord, and praising the God of our help and mercy.* For as this prayer was given us by our Saviour, for our daily use, and as a pat-

tern which we are to follow in all the prayers we ourselves may make, joining this form of praise to its petitions, he sufficiently teaches us that praise should accompany prayer. And indeed prayer, without thanks, is too sordid and selfish to be considered as a praise-worthy duty : it shews, 'tis true, the regard that we have for ourselves, but not any that we have for God. 'Tis a work of necessity, and only when joined with praise does it become a work of love and duty ; and consequently must be incomplete without it. For the more disinterested any religious act is, the more excellent is it ; the more there is of God, and the less of self in it, the more perfect, doubtless, it must be. And, though it does not therefore follow that no action can be good, that is mercenary, yet thus much does and must follow, that the less it is so, 'tis the more worthy and exalted an act of duty.

Another reason why the praise and glory of God should, at least in public, constantly accompany our petitions to him, is, that we shall thereby the better answer the end of religious worship, which is not so much the good of man, as the honour and glory of God. A man may make known his wants unto God ; may cry unto him for corn, and wine, and oil, without honouring him ; but *he that offereth him thanks and praise, he honoureth him.* As then the grand end of religious worship is the honour of God, and that end is best answered by praising the Lord, and giving him *thanks for all the benefits he hath done unto us* ; we should be careful, as our Saviour here instructs us, to praise and glorify God in all our addresses to him.

There is still another reason why we should praise God, at least as often as we pray unto him, *viz.* That of all the good acts and habits which are requisite for every candidate for heaven, only this and one more are thought worthy to be practised in heaven ; all the rest will be useless ; love and praise only shall be exercised in it. Praise is the glorious exercise

exercise and employment of angels ; 'tis the ornament, 'tis the duty, 'tis the entertainment of heaven ; and when we are employed in it here, we exercise ourselves in, and qualify ourselves for, that duty which will be our eternal employment there ; nay, and for the time we are in some sort equal to the angels in heaven.

The reason why I have thus pointed out to you the excellency of the duty of praise and thanksgiving, which our Saviour recommends to us by this doxology, is, that thereby I may reproach, if not cure, the common neglect of it : for there are many who greatly neglect it ; many who but seldom and coldly perform it. The parable of the ten lepers in the gospel, is but too true a representation of mankind in general : there are ten who pray, to one who gives thanks ; and that one, perhaps, prays ten times where he gives thanks once ; and that once he does it not with half the zeal and fervency which accompanies his prayers. And is it not shameful, is it not strange, that so exalted a part of God's service, so divine and angelic a duty, should be so slighted ? that what is the grace, the duty, the exercise, the entertainment of angels, should be so neglected by men ? Let us then, as we are in duty bound, *blefs the Lord ; his praise should be always in our mouths ; we should shew forth his loving-kindness every morning, and his faithfulness every night ; seven times a day should we praise him, because of his righteous judgments.*

This doxology then, you see, when taken all together, teaches us that prayer is not complete without praise, and that the one should accompany the other : that, as St. Paul also advises, *in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, our requests be made known unto God.* Philip. iv. 6.

But when the parts of it are considered separately, and independently of its general view, *Thine is the kingdom* teaches us to acknowledge the supreme authority of God, and to resign up ourselves for him

to reign over us; as 'tis more than in vain to acknowledge his sovereign authority, and at the same time refuse to be governed by it. By *thine* is the *power*, we are taught to rely upon the all-sufficiency of God; to trust in him, and not in any thing we ourselves can do. By *thine* is the *glory*, we are called upon, in all things, to consult the honour and glory of God, and to be careful, as far as in us lies, that he be in no respect deprived of it. By *for ever*, 'tis declared, that all things that appertain to God are eternal.

Nothing now remains, but to see what instruction may and should be gotten from the concluding word of this prayer.

Amen there expresses our wishes, our wants, and our hopes; and we thence may see the obligation we are under, to endeavour fully to understand the meaning of the petitions contained in the body of the prayer, lest, through ignorance of the meaning of any of them, we should say *Amen* to we know not what; which, in the service of God, must rather offend than please him. We may also, from hence, see our obligation to use our endeavours to obtain that which is prayed for; otherwise we do, in some sort, contradict ourselves. But I have had such frequent occasion, in explaining this prayer, to observe to you the connection of prayer and practice, that I shall say nothing more upon that subject; but shall finish with observing—that whenever we use this prayer, we are supposed to understand and believe all that is contained in it; and if we do, how hearty an *Amen* ought we to say at the end of it! All that it contains is every way so much for our advantage, that the *Amen*, which repeats it, and is to witness the force of our faith, and the ardency of our affections, ought to be uttered with all the fervency of devotion: in it we should unite all the warmth that attended each petition, that with that collected force it may enter heaven. So did the primitive Christians; their *Amen* was uttered with

such warmth, and such vigour, that the churches echoed back the sound; a sound, which by them was compared to the fall of waters, or the voice of thunder. How laudable, how glorious this! How reproachful to that bashful, heedless, general silence, which reigns in our modern assemblies! Amongst us 'tis not uttered, at least not heard. This, to the primitive Christians, would have made us appear to think meanly of the requests we made; and regardless whether they were, or were not, answered. Let us, for shame, remedy this cold and heedless behaviour, and conclude our petitions with a bold and vigorous *Amen*, and thereby revive and vindicate its proper use; and at the same time express the strength of our faith, and the warmth of our affections; our firm belief of the divine truths we acknowledge, and our eager desire of the divine blessings we implore:—so shall our *Amen* on earth be ratified and confirmed by an *Amen* from our *Father which is in heaven*. To whom, with the Son, &c.

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